

SKIING HERITAGE



JOURNAL OF ISHA, THE INTERNATIONAL SKIING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. NATIONAL SKI AND SKI EQUIPMENT MUSEUM

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March 2003 (First Issue)

STEIN ERIKSEN

Defining the Ski Celebrity

Early Resorts:

Portillo, Yosemite

The First Ski Shows:

Trade and Consumer

Park City Gathering
Events Schedule Inside

On The Cover

Stein turns on the heat in his signature reverse-shoulder turn at Aspen Highlands, Colo., in 1959—when boots were still laced and slalom poles were made of bamboo.



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SKIING HERITAGE

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AWARENESS OF THE SPORT'S HERITAGE

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

ISHA 2002: Membership at Record High

The year 2002 was the most significant and encouraging since the International Skiing History Association was founded a decade ago. It was the first 12-month period in ISHA's history during which the late Mason Beekley's financial support was not available to make up the operating deficit in publishing SKIING HERITAGE and in sustaining our website, skiinghistory.org. Yet we not only survived, operationally we became stronger. Subscribing members rose to a record high of 950, an increase of almost 20 percent in membership from the beginning of the year. The progress results from the enhancements in SKIING HERITAGE's design and content, and a more sophisticated approach to selling new subscriptions. Moreover, through bulk sales to ski museums, we are close to realizing 2,000 readers for some issues of SKIING HERITAGE.

HERITAGE's rising influence and circulation were not our only accomplishments in 2002. We defined our mission in a single statement: "To preserve and advance the knowledge of ski history and to increase public awareness of the sport's heritage." The mission demonstrated its appeal to donors when, compared to 2001, we doubled to \$36,000 our income from contributions, which itself was a record. If you are among the 230 people who gave to ISHA, I thank you. Your name is among our list of donors appearing on page 24.

We organized the first Annual Gathering to generate significant income—\$15,000—for our association. We helped to facilitate an agreement to transfer the Beekley Library and Collection of Art to Mammoth Lakes, Calif. We passed bylaws encouraging the recruitment of new directors. By the way, if you have an interest in joining ISHA's hard-working board, contact Nominations Committee chairperson Eddy Ancinas (eddy@prodigy.net).

In 2003 we will focus on three efforts:

- Continue to increase the appeal of SKIING HERITAGE through its editorial content, and increase circulation by effective direct-mail solicitation of new subscribers and renewals.
- Enhance the ISHA website to attract more visitors, which has the potential to recruit new subscribers for

HERITAGE. I urge you to visit skiinghistory.org, and participate in our on-line Skiing History Forum.

- Determine the resources needed to attract more donations and to apply for grants.

The year 2002 began with the International Ski History Congress in Park City. Prior to the Congress, ISHA promised to publish a book of the official papers presented at the Congress. In December, the *Collected Papers*, all 300 pages, came off the press, thanks to the work of John Allen, Mort Lund, Elisabeth Aprea and to the generous funds donated by longtime ISHA associate members Rigo Thurmer and Erik Lund. (For information on ordering the book, see page 34.)

Our goal in 2003 is to strengthen ISHA's mission of increasing public awareness of the sport's history. We will do it by expanding Heritage's readership and attracting more visitors to our website.

The Park City Congress included a meeting of ski museum officials. Each museum conducts fund-raising, archiving, research, exhibitions, publishing, and similar activities. The human resources and funds needed to accomplish these tasks are scarce. Museum websites, for example, could save money with a common server and manager, while keeping information at their sites more current. The benefits are clear.

All ISHA Associate Members are invited to attend our March 31-April 6 Gathering, a benefit event that is priced to raise money for ISHA while providing a partial tax-deductible donation for each member who attends.

The publication of SKIING HERITAGE and the operation of our website entail considerable costs of research, editing and writing. Subscription revenue, historically, has never covered the costs. In 2002, without subsidization by Mason Beekley, the continued publication of SKIING HERITAGE was threatened. That prospect has changed. We recently signed a 10-year agreement by which the The Beekley Family Foundation will contribute annually toward funding ISHA's operations. I thank the Foundation's trustees—Joe Sargent and Nat Messina, and Mason's daughters—Liza-Lee, Lorie, Sayre and Francie—for making possible a gift extending Mason's financial support of ISHA for another decade. ISHA's \$110,000 budget this year will continue to rely heavily on memberships and donations to cover our operating deficit. If gifts continue at the pace they have in 2002, we will be in good shape. Your support is needed. —John Fry

READERS RESPOND

Remembering Maria

After shedding a few tears with "Remembering" (Fourth Issue 2002), I realized why Ponce de Leon could never find the legendary Fountain of Youth: He couldn't find the ski slope.

While I never knew all of those greats, they aged magnificently. In adding up the years of those departed



Maria Bogner, looking svelte in stretch, graced the November 1955 cover of Ski.

icons, it appears that skiing has something more to offer than fun and games. Here's to longevity, recognizing the accumulated points they acquired before they crossed the finish line.

I remember when Maria Bogner showed up at the 1960 Winter Games at Squaw Valley, she almost stopped the timer's clock. Every day she appeared in a different stretch ski outfit—Wow! Even though she was 46 at the time, she was stunning to behold.

I would estimate that Maria got as much press attention as her Olympian son. Any way you look at it, the Bogners gave skiing the sex

appeal to make skiing a super sport.

Ski on, Maria Bogner, Steve Bradley, Pete Seibert, Andre Roch, Meggs Durrance. You have run the course of life well.

*Gene Rose
Fresno, Calif.*

Billy Fiske and Aspen

In your obituary on Andre Roch (Remembering, Fourth Issue 2002), you state that the investors who backed Andre Roch's survey of Aspen Mountain in 1936 were Billy Fiske and Ted Ryan.

Is this Billy Fiske the same person who won the gold medal in bobsledding in 1928 and 1932? If so, this is a new-to-me chapter in a very interesting life. He boycotted the 1936 Olympics to protest Hitler. He later volunteered for the RAF and was the first American pilot killed in World War II. Fiske's remains are buried in England, and there's a plaque in London's Westminster Abbey acknowledging him and his wartime service.

*Phil Johnson
Cliffon Park, N.Y.*

Yes that was the same Billy Fiske. To be accurate, Roch did a survey of not only Aspen Mountain but of the entire back-country up to Mount Hayden. As a result, Ryan and Fiske financed the first ski lodge in the Aspen area, the Highland Bavarian.

Fiske had convinced the Colorado legislature to pass a bill to put a big tramway up Hayden when World War II struck. Ryan, incidentally, was with the OSS during World War II, and came back to start cross-country skiing in the Highlands area.

When Friedl Pfeifer came to town on visits from the 10th Mountain base at Camp Hale in 1943-44, he talked about the tram project with Laurence Elisha, owner of the Hotel Jerome. Pfeifer pointed out that a tram running over the 11,000-

foot tree line on Mt. Hayden would have been a commercial disaster because of its frequent exposure to high winds. Fortunately, it was never built.

Andre Roch, of course, was the visionary who designed Aspen's first ski runs, as the following, from reader Tim Willoughby, explains.

The early pioneers of Aspen skiing attribute the town's first successful ski lodge to the charisma, expertise and advice of Andre Roch.

To build it, Billy Fiske, Ted Ryan and Tom Flynn formed the Highland Bavarian Corp. They brought Roch, a Swiss avalanche expert and mountain guide, to Aspen in 1936 because they wanted a guide at their lodge and because they needed his skiing and avalanche expertise to design a ski area. Even as a young man, Roch was considered one of the world's foremost experts.

Highland Bavarian's original plan was to cut trails in Little Annie Basin. Roch believed that it would be better to build a village and ski area six miles away at the far end of the valley below some of the highest peaks in Colorado. Roch designed a ski area with some runs having a drop of over 5,000 vertical feet. It was never built.

Aspen mayor Fred Willoughby, owner of the Midnight Mine, assigned his son the job of hosting Roch's stay. Aspen residents became enthralled by Roch's love of the outdoors. He taught a number of Aspenites to ski, and the more experienced went with him to survey the area's ski terrain.

The Highland Bavarian partners asked Roch to organize a core group of 30 locals to form the Aspen Ski Club. Roch told the club president, "Almost all skiers in America will be

Continued on page 6



Andrea and the 1948 Women's Olympic Team (l. to r.): coach Walter Haensli, Gretchen Fraser, Paula Kann (Válar), Dodie Post (Cann), Alice Kjaer (manager), Brynhild Grassmoen, Andrea Mead (Lawrence), Ruth Marie-Seewart, Becky Fraser (Cremer) and Ann Wynn.

Andrea: Setting It Straight

I very much appreciated my story by Mort Lund in the last issue. It was charming—particularly the tone in which he captured my early history and that of my family.

I'm a bit reluctant to offer the following corrections—some of them minor, others less so—but in the interest of historical accuracy, my conscience tells me to point them out.

When my parents wed and went abroad, they leased a home (not a room) at Cap Ferrat. When, in 1947, I viewed the Austrian amputee skiers, it was at Bad Gastein (not St. Anton), where I went for the Austrian Championships. In reference to my visit with the Lawrences in Arosa after David and I were married, the stables were Laudy Lawrence's thoroughbred stables and not for the use of "guest" horses. After David and I bought the ranch in Colorado, it was not quite the challenge that was reported: I never cooked all summer for a haying crew of 20 men—rather I only cooked for the haying crew in August (when haying took place), and I had someone to help me. Also, we rarely had 20 men—eight to ten was more likely. And I left for Europe six weeks

after daughter Deirdre's birth, not five months. On page 21, the sentence that begins "So impressive was Andrea's fight to restrain development...." is misleading. My position was—and is—that we can be more careful in the development of our mountain communities. What I really brought to it was my energy and passion for where I lived on the Eastern Sierra. I was chairperson of the Board of Supervisors, not president. Finally, the on-course photo identified as "Seefeld, Austria, 1951" was actually the Oslo Olympic salom in 1952.

None of these clarifications—call them nit-picking if you will—detract from the tone and thrust of an other-

wise marvelous article. But my conscience now feels better.

Andrea Mead Lawrence
Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

I have admired your efforts at SKIING HERITAGE to preserve ski history, but your article on Andrea Mead Lawrence was marred by your statement that she was in three Olympics, unmatched by any American.

That is clearly in error. A 1948 Olympic teammate, Wendell Broomhall, ran cross-country in 1948, 1952 and 1960. Art Devlin jumped in the same three. My daughter Dorces Wonsavage, Lester Thompson and Ingrid Butts all participated in the 1988, 1992 and 1994 Games.

And let's not forget the four-timers: Bill Koch, who participated in 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1992, and Nina Kemmpel in 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2002.

Stephen L. DenHartog
Hanover, N.H.

Those nordic runners sure seem to stay young! The context of the story was, of course, alpine racing but the text should have specified that. We should have also corrected our statement to say that Andrea was the only alpine racer to compete on three Olympic teams "in her time."

Other Letters? Check the ISHA Website

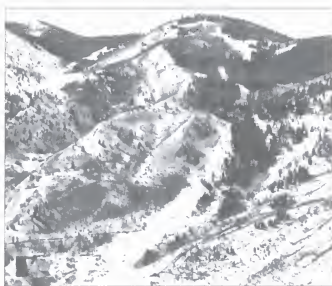
We receive dozens of reader questions each month—unfortunately, too many to answer in these pages. To see what readers are asking, and our answers, check ISHA's Skiing History Forum at <http://skiinghistory.org>. For instructions on accessing the Skiing History Forum, see pg. 20 this issue.

READERS RESPOND

Continued from page 4

beginners, so you have to build a beginner's area. But you will be known outside of Colorado, so you must also develop a racing trail and sponsor major races. That reputation will make it easier to attract skiers, funding and accelerate development of the area." Before he left, Andre Roch laid out Roch Run on the face of Aspen Mountain. He felt that it would be the most challenging racing trail in America.

In the summer of 1937 Frank



Aspen, 1946, Roch Run at center.

Willoughby and Frank and John Dolinsek cut most of the run. Other club members cut the beginners area at the top of Monarch Street and built a boat tow on land the mayor was able to talk Aspen Mountain mining claim owners into leasing to the city. The federal government's Civilian Conservation Corps built a 55-meter ski jump. In those days, race meets often included jumping for a combined title.

The Ski Club hosted the Southern Rocky Mountain Skiing Association Alpine Championships in 1938 and 1940 on the Roch trail and hosted the U.S. Nationals in 1941. Those put

Aspen on the map both nationally and internationally. Had it not been in part for Roch, Aspen would not have become an American skiing icon. Andre Roch is a pioneers' pioneer.

Tim Willoughby
Crowley Lake, Calif.

Avalement: Another View

Stu Campbell's "Ailing from Avalement" (Third Issue 2002) demands comment. Campbell agrees with

Georges Joubert, who described (wrongly, I believe) avalement as part of a "jet turn," without any effort on the part of the skier to sit back.

Joubert believed that the skis were simply slid forward after the skier sets his edges to start the jet turn. He said that there was only the "appearance" of deliberately sitting back. The sit-back position was solely

the result of pushing the skis forward.

I have an opposite view. To begin, here is the way it went back in the late 1950s and early 1960s: As equipment adapted to the needs of younger, eclectic skiers, new techniques were invented. One of the big advances came about when the *avant garde* in the West—I was one of them—began experimenting. We applied forward pressure to use our front edges and applied back pressure to force the back edges to bite more or to cause the fronts of the skis to plane up in deep snow or to facilitate swiveling the skis at the crest of a mogul.

Sitting back? Joubert views it as the

worst of all skiing sins. Hardly. In order to pretend that there was no such thing as deliberately sitting back, Joubert constantly resorted to euphemisms such as "in deep snow, the tails are supported on a firm base."

Well, we did, and still do, sit back deliberately. To apply back pressure without straining our midbody muscles, we began making fan-shaped fiberglass-covered inserts and slipping them into the backs of our ski boots. This was shortly commercialized into the more efficient Jet Stix.

Sitting back was, and still is, an important adjunct to one's quiver of techniques, although much less so now that skis and boots are so much altered.

Joubert writes about "carving with tail pressure," and "pushing or pressing" the feet forward. Hah! We rarely pushed the feet forward, but we often did apply back pressure to the high-backed cuffs of our boots, which were now high enough to permit us to sit back without tearing a stomach muscle or making an inadvertent sitzmark. And until very recently, at least, our Olympic racers frequently applied back pressure to make the tail of their shaped ski complete its carving mission.

Sitting back was conceived as a brief moment, but an important one. I know something about "jet turns." I ghosted Jean Claude Killy's technical articles in *Skiing* from 1968 to 1973, and in the course of that I realized that weighting the tails of the skis would be a faster way to gain speed.

But doing so prior to Jet Stix and higher boots imperiled one's balance. Then the Le Trappeur boot company realized that if the ski boot heel was raised up an inch or more, the forward angle of the cuff would be



Jet Stix: Help from behind.

increased, so that skiers like Killy could more easily apply back pressure to their skis.

Paul Michal, manufacturer of the Dynamic VR 7 ski, realized that moving the waist of the ski back a few centimeters produced a better and more prolonged carving response from back pressure on the ski boots. We in the West found that rather than trying to push the feet forward on such skis, it was much more effective and less disturbing to one's balance to deliberately sit back with deep knee bend. We sat back just enough to apply pressure to the back edges so they really gripped, or "set," and then, of course, the ski and feet shot forward in consequence.

This slight sitting back served the double function of soaking up a bump (avalement) and unweighting the skis, so that the simultaneous twisting and leaning of the upper body down the hill (anticipation) blended into a neat, efficient turn.

Joubert was a consummate ski technician, but he did fail in one respect. He never realized that all skis are not created equal. As one who personally tested hundreds of skis when I ran *Skiing's* ski test program, I learned that variations from pair to pair, even of the same length, can be significant.

At *Skiing*, we found variations in flex and torsion to considerably alter ski performance. Skis of the same length, brand and model, for example, had stiffer tails, a characteristic that

made it imperative to sit back to get a carving response. In those days, most sitting back was deliberate. It still is today—done judiciously.

Doug Pfeiffer
Big Bear Lake Calif.

Summiting Ski Tip

One of the stories I recall about running Ski Tip ranch (Second Issue 2002) might be one you might appreciate—the first ascent of a narrow chimney on Ski Tip's difficult

north wall.

It was at 1 a.m. in the dark of night when I was awakened by loud hammering right near my head. I hurried to the living room and there was Dave Gallagher, our Forest Service Ranger, suspended upside down from near the top of the fireplace chimney, to the obvious interest of some of our night-owl guests.

Dave had driven in some pitons on the way up—that's the pounding I had heard—and said "Edna, I'm showing your guests how to climb a rock face. Next we're going to pretend that the ceiling is an overhang."

I watched Dave go hand over hand along the ceiling beam until he reached the end, turn around and come back the same way, then descend the fireplace and drop to the floor. I didn't worry as much as the guests because I knew Dave had just completed a new ascent of the Devil's Tower in Wyoming, a feat that had been documented in a series of pictures in *Life*.

There are no pictures of this ascent, but the pitons are still firmly in place in the stones of the Ski Tip fireplace—and no one since has attempted the climb.

Edna Dercum
Dillon, Colo.

Kruckenhauser: A Photographer, Too

In regard to Stu Campbell's story on wedeln and professor Stefan Kruckenhauser (Third Issue 2002), having skied in Europe since 1958, I have often been to St. Christoph on the Arlberg Pass above St. Anton. I used to watch Dr. Kruckenhauser assemble his ski instructors in formation in the morning and dismiss them at 4 p.m., again in formation.

There was no question who was in charge. I once hitched a ride to St. Christoph from St. Anton with Mrs. Kruckenhauser. I had been forewarned she was an aggressive driver, and it certainly was a wild ride up the snow-covered Arlberg Pass in her Volkswagen camper.

I own Kruckenhauser's 1937 book *Snow Canvas: Ski Men and Mountains with the Leica*. Kruckenhauser was an accomplished photographer long before he became a technical guru. The book is dedicated to Hannes Schneider and has a preface by Peter Lunn, son of Schneider's great friend Arnold Lunn.

Next time I'm in St. Anton, I'll visit the local ski museum. Warren Lerude of Reno, former publisher of several



Dr. Stefan Kruckenhauser: As gifted a photographer as he was a skiino technician.

This One



RNP-DSF-KATZ

READERS RESPOND

Reno newspapers, says it's the best he's ever seen.

Rex Gribble
Heidelberg, Germany

Northwest Mountaineering and 'Figure Skiing'

While reviewing back issues of HERITAGE for my research on the history of ski mountaineering in Washington that I have posted on my website, I noticed a few errors.

In the Fall 1995 issue, you referred to the May 1942 climb of Mount Rainier by members of the 87th Mountain Infantry as the first winter ascent of the mountain. In fact, Rainier was first climbed in winter in February 1922 by visiting alpinists Jacques and Jean Landry, Jacques Bergues, and newsreel cameraman Charles Perryman.

Another ascent was made in April 1928, when Seattle ski mountaineers Walter Best, Hans Otto Giese and Otto Strizek reached the summit after abandoning their skis at 11,800 feet.

In HERITAGE's First Issue 1999, your "Long Thongs" story reports that the late Seattle fireman Matt Broze, winner of the Silver Skis in 1942, was author of *Freestyle Skiing*, published in 1972. In fact, Matt V. Broze was the Silver Skis champion, while his son Matt C. Broze was the freestyle writer.

Finally, readers might be interested in an early article that you didn't mention: "Figure Skiing" by Newt Tolman in the 1936 *American Ski Annual* (p. 156). Tolman paints a remarkably accurate picture of ballet skiing as it later emerged in the 1970s. He writes: "The downhill racing enthusiast has the most fun of anybody on long trails, but the figure skier gets a kick out of the mildest of nursery slopes."

He continues: "Whenever possible figure skiing should be done with music. The principles of dancing can be applied with great success." He

describes 360-degree spins, skating steps, Reuel christies, and something that sounds like a 1970s leg-breaker.

Lowell Skoog
Seattle, Wash.

www.alpenglow.org/ski-history

Middlebury First?

I am on the board of the Middlebury Ski Club. We are currently in the process of restoring the original log lodge at the Snow Bowl for the students in the ski club. Our lodge was built in 1937 by the CCC. Are there older ski lodges in the East? In the U.S.?

David Napier
Middlebury, Vt.

In the U.S., certainly, the Sun Valley Lodge (1936) and the Alhambra in Yosemite (1928) are older. In the East, although we found no clear claim predating the construction of Middlebury Snow Bowl Lodge, there are a number of structures that need to be investigated before Middlebury can claim clear title. One question to be answered is if a current structure bears enough resemblance to the original to be called the same structure.

The Toll House at Mt. Mansfield was erected in February 1937, but has undergone major changes and can no longer be considered an original structure.

The Stone House near the top of the Nose Dive on Mt. Mansfield was built by the CCC in January 1936, and because of its structure, has remained virtually unchanged ever since.

In the mid-1930s, the CCC erected a side camp to support its main camp at nearby Moscow, Vt. It lies diagonally opposite the base lodge at Mt. Mansfield and has been used for years as a state dormitory for students. It still has its original structure and contains kitchen facilities, bunk beds and other furniture first used some 40 or 50 years ago.

The Adirondack Loj, outside Lake Placid, N.Y., is another early lodge from those days. It looks much the same today as

it did then, but the date it was erected will have to be determined.

The log-built Bear Mountain Inn at Bear Mountain, N.Y., was used sometime in the 1930s to serve the jumping hill and skiing trails, but the exact year it was built needs to be determined (a simple phone call to Bear Mountain Inn should do it).

The Pinkham Notch Camp at the foot of Mt. Washington was erected in the 1920s. However, it has been revamped many times over the years and may not qualify for that reason.

Bousquet's, in Massachusetts, built a log base lodge that served Clarence Bousquet's ski slopes over the years and may have been constructed in the early 1930s. However, it may not be still operational.

As with most historians' tasks, the question of priority requires research. Middlebury Snow Bowl lodge, if not extensively remodeled over time, may qualify as the oldest base lodge in the East still in use, but the question needs further investigation.

Right Honor, Wrong School

In your report on Nikki Stone's induction into the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame (Third Issue 2002), Union College, where Nikki graduated in 1997, is misidentified as being in New Jersey. It is in Schenectady, New York.

In 1969, I took a history-teaching position at Union College—and I learned that, besides Nikki, other notable "Dutchmen," (the term for Union athletes) include onetime U.S. President Chester Arthur, William Seward (of Seward's Folly fame) and President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis.

Nikki Stone, incidentally, is a lineal descendant of Eliphalet Nott, who led Union College from 1804 to 1866—the longest tenure held by any college president in American history.

Phil Johnson
Clifton Park, N.Y.

The One and Only Stein

Born to a royal skiing family, an impeccably mannered and athletically gifted super-star learns when to turn on the speed—and the money.

By Morten Lund

He was born in the family home in the hills behind Oslo right next to Norway's hallowed Holmenkollen jump. His mother—always “Bitten” to her family and friends—was delighted just before he was born at seeing the gossamer spider web on the ceiling—a sign of luck. This child, to be named Stein, would be a lucky baby.

So he was. In his nearly 50 years in America, Stein Eriksen has remained the sport's most fully celebrated skier, the preternaturally handsome superskier with an untouchable style, unquenchable smile and unbridled exuberance. In his heyday, he so permeated the ski culture that he was referred to coast-to-coast simply as “Stein.”

No other ski celebrity so clearly represented the mid-century change in American skiing. “To ski like Stein” became the silent prayer of those blessed by the sight of the flashing blond, bronzed, blue-eyed Viking dream image in action.

A generation of young skiers in mid-century America, out for fun, were ready for that image. Stein's joy-of-skiing message was different. It was all about looking good, feeling good and skiing, well, *poetically*. American skiers in the late 1950s through the 1960s took Stein to heart and held him firmly as their talisman even as they headed into their golden years.

The Stein phenomenon in America was born of the same history that brought on Stein's six Olympic and World Championship medals between 1950 and 1954. His personal magnetism and racing triumphs alike flowed from the self-confidence of a born member of a royal skiing family.

Stein's father Marius had been a leading nordic combined competitor in the early 1900s in the Telemark region northwest of the capital of Oslo. The previous generation of Telemarkers invented modern skiing, being the first to develop systematic jumping competition, to discover how to turn skis at speed, to fashion practical downhill skis and bindings. It was here that the mysteries of fast, controlled downhill, as well as soaring on wings of wood,



were best understood at the close of the nineteenth century. Marius was 38 when the first Winter Olympics took place in 1924 at Chamonix—a bit late for his competitive prime—but his athletic ability had been well demonstrated as a 25-year-old when he was named to Norway's 1912 national gymnastic team. In short, the genes were good. So was the business acumen.

In 1915, at age 30, Marius headed the sports department for Oslo's Gunerius Petersen department store. At that point, he redefined his life as a ski equipment inventor and entrepreneur. In his 1964 book, *Come Ski With Me*, Stein writes, “One of the memories of my childhood was my father's workshop in the basement of our home, where he was constantly making some gadget or other.”

Marius met Bitten while skiing in Nordmarka in the suburbs of Oslo. They were married shortly thereafter. The couple produced Marius Jr. in 1922. Two years later, Marius Sr. founded the family fortune with a most impressive invention, the “Eriksen toeplate,” which replaced the classic Huitfeldt toe iron. The plate could be screwed to the top of the ski (the Huitfeldt had to be rammed transversely through the midbody of the ski, weakening it).



Hannes Schneider and Marius Eriksen Sr. With his unique binding and the Eriksen ski, Marius had established a credible reputation throughout Europe.

Best of all, the Eriksen adjusted to fit any boot. Affectionately, or otherwise, known in the U.S. as “the bear-trap binding,” it reigned as the world’s most popular toepiece throughout the 1940s. It became “government issue” for the 10th Mountain Division in World War II and accompanied the 10th’s veterans after the war across the American snow belt.

A huge stream of sales enabled Marius to build his substantial new home just 10 minutes’ walk from the sacred ground of the Holmenkollen jump and finish it just in time for the birth—on December 11, 1927—of his second son, Stein. By then Marius Sr. had his own shop, Eriksen Sport, in Oslo at Akersgate 21, selling the binding and Marius’ newly designed Eriksen Ski, which sold well on Marius’ reputation and the fine workmanship of the Oslo factory that produced it under contract. The whole enterprise—the skis, the binding, the sports shop—supported the family handsomely. Young Stein could not but note that the good life arose out of ingenuity and effort.

“Akersgate 21 was a second home to me,” Stein recalls. “I learned an enormous amount about skiing just from watching how the store was operated. Here was where the leading sports figures of Norway gathered. Just being with those god-like men was an inspiration.”

The eminence of the family was especially notable during Holmenkollen Week, which was to Oslo as the Carnival to Rio—the essence of the nation. In Norway, skiing was a declaration of patriotism. At Holmenkollen time, great names from all of alpine Europe arrived at the Eriksen home to mix with socially prestigious Norwegians grateful for invitations to the Eriksen domain. Stein’s ideal of a satisfactory life was formed by the world of his family and their friends, and he managed never to settle for less.

Here a key confluence occurs. Shortly after Stein’s birth the Eriksens took in a prominent guest. In the winter of 1928, a 25-year-old named Willy Bogner, Bavaria’s (and later Germany’s) number one nordic combined competitor, arrived. When Willy decided to go into the ski business, he applied to Marius Eriksen as an apprentice, seeing Marius as unequivocally the best ski maker of the time. Marius was much taken with Willy’s admiration and his kindred spirit. Willy was an invited houseguest thereafter during every one of his long annual visits to Oslo. The intertwining of Willy Bogner and the Eriksens was to have a decisive role in Stein’s trajectory through life. “Willy was practically adopted as a member of the family,” says Stein. “To my parents, Willy was like an elder son. When [Marius and I] were very small, we were delighted to be carried around on his shoulders every evening before we went to bed.”

Willy became the Eriksen sales rep for central Europe, and helped maintain Eriksen as Europe’s top-quality equipment line. He introduced Marius Sr. to Hannes Schneider of St. Anton, founder of Europe’s largest ski school. More practically, Hannes owned St. Anton’s foremost ski shop and was agreeable to carrying the Eriksen line.

As the Eriksen empire grew, so did little Stein. He got his first skis when, as he remembers it, “I may have been three or four. Father made sure that we had a little ski jump and slalom hill in our own backyard.” In a few seasons, Stein was joining Marius Jr. in backyard practice, using candles to light up the jump as the early sub-arctic night set in. More telling for Stein’s future was the fact that Willy Bogner was an excellent slalom skier. At a time when there were few, if any, Norwegians nearly as proficient in alpine racing, it was Willy who showed Stein and Marius Jr. how to turn through the gates. The brothers Eriksen were soon addicted. Only mother Bitten’s oversight kept the boys at their schoolwork, “despite our intense desire,” as Stein recalls, “to do nothing but ski and follow Willy Bogner around.”

The First Race

At age 7, Stein went into his first slalom race and would have won by a mile except for crossing his tips and falling at the finish of his second run. His father consoled him by saying, “It is better to win once in a while than all the time.” Stein always remembered that the life of skiing and racing was much more than keeping score.

Stein at 10 was developing a frame so seriously skinny his parents were concerned and enrolled him in a private gymnastics class to build him up. It was another conflu-

ence. His teacher was Odd-Bye Nilsen, Norway's champion gymnast. Young Stein turned out to be so talented he was selected by Nilsen for the junior gymnastic team that toured Norway in 1938. Stein was now developing the skills that later served so well in helping him recover magically from near disaster with cat-like control in the air. In 1939, Willy Bogner's slalom lessons paid off for Marius Jr. At 17, he became Norway's slalom champion and was sent to the 1939 FIS world championships at Zakopane, Poland. It was the last world-class European ski meet for eight years. A few months later, in September, an unbidden German army rolled into Poland and World War II was on.

German Occupation

Norway had remained neutral and Stein's life went on. He was given special downhill bindings in the winter of 1940, the kind with heel cables that hooked to the ski underfoot to hold the heel down. Immediately, as Stein says, "control became very precise." He began winning so often in junior slaloms that he hung up his jumping skis to concentrate on alpine racing. But the 1940 season was the last winter of junior competition for a while. In April, the Germans invaded and Norway spent the next five years under German occupation.

Marius Jr. escaped to Britain in a fishing boat and trained in a Norwegian-financed flight school just outside Toronto. He later became a British fighter ace. Stein was too young at 12 to flee and fight. He stayed home to share the surreal life of an occupied nation. The Germans took over all school buildings for their own use and parents had to organize classes (including Stein's gymnastic class) in private homes to educate their children. Then, as punishment for Marius Jr.'s defection, the Eriksens were evicted from their home and forced to shelter with two families they had never met.

There were no public ski competitions. Germans ruled that members of the *Hird*—the German-sponsored Nazi youth organization—were to be given a place in every ski meet. Norway's skiers refused to compete at all. "To keep ourselves in shape," says Stein, "we organized illegal slaloms deep in the forest around Oslo."

The Somersault Emerges

Another confluence: The German occupation spurred Stein to perfect the on-slope somersault (the maneuver itself had been introduced by Norway's Sigmund and Birger Ruud in the late 1920s, but off the lip of a ski jump). It was to be his signature exhibition. On Rodkleiva, Oslo's slalom hill, Stein and his friends used kickers built in soft snow to dive headlong into more and more daring somersaults. The *Hird* could not very well insist on inclusion in a for-fun pastime, so Stein and his friends had the grim satisfaction of snubbing the young Nazis.



Stein's mother Bitten in 1931. Equally at home on the race course, she organized the Oslo Ladies Slalom Club in the Thirties.

Norway emerged scarred but jubilant when the war in Europe was finally over in 1945. Stein was 17. Marius Sr. was in poor health, so Bitten, Marius, Jr. and Stein had been taking over the family business. Still, the brothers had time for training—Stein began showing the promise of his years at gymnastics. At the postwar Holmenkollen Kandahar in 1947, at age 20, he won the downhill and combined, his first important alpine victory.

In 1948, having completed his public school final exam, Stein was taking graduate business administration courses, which would be useful to his family firm. He had also become hooked on somersaulting. First he had trained in summer and fall on a trampoline to somersault in a swan-dive fully extended body position. That next winter, on his first somersault on skis, he went off the lip of the kicker in a swan dive and rotated forward, fully extended. As his head came down to bring the skis directly overhead, he tucked to speed the rotation and then stretched out to slow it and land as lightly as a cat—a spectacular stunt of no earthly use, just plain fun. Stein was the first—and, for a long time, the only—skier to perform layout somersaults.

That same year, 1948, saw the first postwar Olympics, at St. Moritz, and the inception of the "Stein technique."



Stein turns it on for Olympic giant slalom gold at Oslo, 1952. (Inset) Post-race fans set the stage for the legions of admirers in the years yet to come.



Marius Jr. and Stein were selected for the 1948 Norwegian alpine team. "It was our parents' proudest moment," says Stein. St. Moritz, though, turned out to be a mortifying wake-up. "As a team, we had no international experience. We didn't do a thing," recalls Stein. He had the top team score—a 29th in the slalom.

Norway's alpine skiers had not survived the Occupation to be shut out of international competition. Back in Norway, the team and coach Kjell Borge Anderson began furiously analyzing Olympic race films. The best skiers at St. Moritz had been "reversing" the shoulder nearest the slalom pole, swinging it forward to let the body and skis pass closer to the pole, shortening the track. This "reverse shoulder" was the opening wedge of a technique that eventually forced major changes in recreational technique and became another Stein signature.

Within a decade, "reverse" would displace the classic, nearly universal "Arlberg technique," in which the entire body swung into the turn. Reverse turns were, naturally,

quicker. And a series of quick, short reverse turns—a stunning, expert sequence—became *wedeln*, a word that stood for a whole new technique that was taking over the ski world, and a word that stood for "Stein's technique."

The goal of all this training was two years away, the 1950 World FIS championships at Aspen. In 1949, with four months left to go, Stein arrived in America early to work as a salesman for Gus Sunne's Veteran's Ski Shop in Hartford, Conn.—a shop that carried the Eriksen line—to improve his English and assess the U.S. ski market.

In December, Steve Knowlton, who owned a shop in Aspen that sold the Eriksen line, met Stein in Denver. Once in Aspen, Stein came to love the town, with its relaxed and open social life, where celebrities were treated naturally. Stein was immediately reminded of his life at home in Norway, in which celebrities were often just friends.

Aspen: Slalom Bronze

Stein trained hard and well at Aspen, capping two years of effort to make the most of the new technique. He proved he had done just that by rising from his distant 29th in the Olympic slalom two years earlier to a bronze in the slalom at Aspen. This shook the ski world—the first alpine medal for men won from outside Europe. And it was won by a 22-year-old who trained and raced mostly in his own country.

Back in Norway, after festivals for Stein's new status were held among family and friends. Marius Jr. decided to retire from racing to work full time in the family firm. Marius Sr. died that fall. With his mother and brother taking charge, Stein was free to focus on the role of being Norway's number one hope for medals in the 1952 Olympics. Here he would have the hometown advantage. The Winter Games were to be held at Oslo. The Norwegian team again went into intensive training on Rodkleiva. Stein recalls that they "practiced and practiced until we knew every possible variation in the terrain, every conceivable gate combination." They also trained at Norefjell, 90 miles north of Oslo, for a brand new Olympic event—the giant slalom. Stein was soon well up among the prospects for a medal. Among other victories, he won the 1951 Lauberhorn slalom at Wengen, Switzerland, and won the slalom in Wengen again in 1952.

On the opening day of the Games in Oslo, the torch arrived at Bislet Stadium, after being carried from the cradle of skiing, Telemark, by 94 Norwegian cross-coun-

try skiers over the 200 miles to Oslo. The ceremonial lighting of the Olympic flame began at Bislet while Stein was standing at the starting gate in the giant slalom at Norefjell. In his run, Stein almost lost it. Part way down the course, his skis went flying out to the right, his left fist hit the snow—hard. But then he bounced back, a stunning catlike recovery, to beat out Italy's Zeno Colo, as well as Austria's Toni Spiess, Christian Pravda and Othmar Schneider—Pravda by two seconds, Spiess by three. He had broken the Continental monopoly on men's Olympic gold!

The downhill at Norefjell was an anticlimax. Stein took a seventh. But the slalom was another story. It was run down two difficult courses over Rodkleiva's 540-foot drop. Spiess and Pravda attempted to quash the Norwegian nemesis in do-or-die runs that neither finished, leaving Stein in the lead. In the second run, Stein was still leading when he hit an icy stretch that caused his skis to slide off course. He threw himself around in a gymnastic 180-degree body swivel—and finished strongly. Othmar Schneider slipped ahead into first place but Stein took second. Not bad: an Olympic alpine silver and gold for a nation that had never won an alpine medal.

"I suddenly found myself elevated to hero status," recalls Stein. "I was presented to King Haakon and Crown Prince Olav." He was showered with offers of employment by numerous agents. It was a little early to hop off the podium permanently at his prime when there was a world championship on the two-year horizon, so he continued racing. And, simultaneously, he pursued a publicized romance with Katy Rodolph of the American team. In 1953, Averell Harriman invited Stein for an entire winter at Sun Valley as a "celebrity instructor" and to race for the Sun Valley Ski Club. Stein accepted, with a sense that America was a place where he was interested in pursuing a career. He was a top racer on the 1953 American circuit, winning the Roch Cup Combined at Aspen and the North American slalom at Stowe, among other victories, and continued to keep company with Katy Rodolph, who was training with the U.S. women's team.

Stein took some ribbing about his first run at Sun Valley, which was not a success. He had started off in the company of several instructors skiing down Exhibition—in deep powder, a condition Stein had never skied in earnest. He found his skis accelerating and planing, but he couldn't turn them. He tried forcing the tips down and precipitated a spectacular rolling fall that went on interminably. He staggered up, caked with snow. An instructor caught up, asking with a grin, "Are you really Stein Eriksen?"

Stein no sooner learned to ski powder than he began



Marius Sr., Bitten, and "elder son" Willy Bogner, 1931.

experimenting, free for the first time to just play, and developed a sequence of extremely reversed acrobatic shoulder positions while banking spectacularly off the walls of Canyon. On request, he also did his swan dive somersault off a ridge above Rock Garden and tried to show Chris Pravda and Dick Buek how to do it—but lacking Stein's long training for the stunt, its thrill was lost on them. Buek, a fearless racer (12th in the 1952 Oslo downhill) landed his first try by driving his face into his ski, cutting his mouth badly. Although he rarely ducked a challenge, he called it quits on this one.

Later in the season, Katy Rodolph drove Stein to Detroit to purchase a car. He had a friend who worked with a dealer and ski area owner named Everett Kircher. Stein said yes to a 1953 sports coupe but no to Kircher's offer of a job heading the school at Kircher's Boyne Mountain. Stein's focus was on the world championships, period.

Back in Europe, he began training for the 1954 World FIS championships at Åre, Sweden, on the international race circuit. During the Lauberhorn downhill a month before the Åre races, Stein recalls that "I lost control, bounced from mogul to mogul on one hip, but fortunately no bones were broken. I underwent treatment for five days in Schruns, Austria." A week later, he won the Hahnenkamm giant slalom in Kitzbühel, Austria, but fell in the slalom.

On the sidelines was Willy Bogner, still exercising his big-brother role. He saw that Stein was off in his timing. "Go home," Willy said. "Stop racing for a month." Stein took Willy's advice, left the circuit, and returned to Oslo, where he practiced on his own until he got his confidence and timing back. Just before the Åre championship, at the last pre-championship tune-up at Opdal, he swept the slalom and the giant slalom. Stein was ready.



At the Harriman Cup, Sun Valley, 1953.

At Åre, Stein beat Schneider and Spiess by a second and a half in the first run of the slalom. The Austrians both blew their second run—which meant world gold medal number one for Stein.

In the giant slalom, he beat France's François Bonlieu for gold number two. He had finished well enough in downhill to take the combined—gold number three and the title of world champion, making it a total of six Olympic and world championship medals in four years.

Stein was 27, and it was time to pursue another life. He could have become Norway's alpine coach, for a pittance, or gone into the family business. Stein liked the idea of going to America and heading a ski school, so he turned to Everett Kircher at Boyne Mountain. No one was making a fortune in those days as a ski school director, especially in regional resorts, when Everett Kircher offered a two-year contract at \$5,000 a year. Stein asked Kircher to "double it." Kircher did. So, it was \$10,000—roughly \$50,000 in today's dollars—magnificent for the time, but the nub of it was that Boyne suited Stein perfectly.

The Boyne Years

When Stein arrived in the fall of 1954, Boyne had a thriving school teaching 400 ski-weekers every day but, as Stein says, "I didn't know how to run a ski school." By bringing in his own squad of four instructors from Norway, and handling Boyne's American instructors so they became extraordinarily helpful, Stein learned a lot very quickly. He also brought the new reverse technique to America. Boyne became one of the earliest U.S. resorts to discard Airlberg in favor of reverse. With that, with the

eight how-to articles by Stein published in *Ski* and *Skiing* magazines and with his demonstrations playing in two dozen top lecture films over the next decade, Stein became America's poster boy for the new technique. Later on, he would be faulted for claiming to be a founder of the American Technique in which reverse was declared official by the Professional Ski Instructors of America in the 1960s. Yet, in fairness, Stein had done some heavy lifting to popularize reverse during its very birth in the U.S. He also introduced "mambo," an exhibition turn picked up during a brief visit with Emile Allais in Portillo during the summer of 1954. It was a trick turn in which the upper body rotated slowly to pull the lower body around, then back the other way to pull the lower body into the second turn. Leaving a sinuous track like a sine wave across the fall line, Stein seemed to be turning both ways at once. News of this brought filmmaker Warren Miller running to tiny Boyne—proving, ultimately, what Stein was there to accomplish.

The Stein phenomenon—the technical daring, the effortless glamour—took root on American soil at Boyne as Stein mounted elaborate exhibitions for the media and public. He did mogul hops, he did mambo, he did three aerial swan dives every weekend—and all that generated enormous publicity. Ski historian John Allen notes, "Stein put Boyne on the map. Kircher was very savvy to get Stein there. The whole world now knew about Boyne." Stein was the new thing, no doubt about it. He wore outfits that were stunning—sleek, bright-colored Bogner stretch pants (Willy and his wife Maria had just invented them) under gorgeous Norwegian pattern sweaters knitted by a home industry in Norway organized by his mother. Grunge-chic, big in the Midwest, lost favor to impeccably turned-out fashion statements intimating that to ski like Stein, you at least had to look like Stein. Of course the waves of red-gold hair and startlingly blue eyes were hard to emulate, but no question that there was now a new aspect to skiing—fashion, and not just for women.

Stein's image was everywhere, especially in lecture films that criss-crossed the country. And—more impact—Stein represented both Eriksen and Bogner, taking to the road off season to collect orders from dozens of key specialty ski shops in the Midwest and the East.

The impact was bankable. In 1957, after two years at Boyne, Stein signed with Heavenly Valley, Calif. Heavenly offered a more substantial salary, and a sports shop concession in the bargain. Stein also became an off-season ski school director by flying south to Portillo, where he succeeded Emile Allais.

To this point in his career, Stein had had impressive success despite a certain impatience with ordinary mortals. Athletes at the gold medal level on a world-class scale are not your average human beings. They are very different creatures, at minimum commanding explosive energy and a steely contempt for risk only a few will ever sum-

mon, even if brought up with the good manners evident in Stein. Normally, he was so genuinely positive and enthusiastic he lit up any scene he entered, but he could be less than gracious if he felt he was being crowded or held back.

Perversely, that was the attraction—the sense that here was someone well out of the ordinary. And that was Stein to the bone. As one female acquaintance said at the time, “Stein is definitely not one of the boys.” His onetime wife Merrill Ford (who met Stein at Boyne) notes, “Stein had ‘star quality.’” He clearly defined post-war ski celebrity from the previous Arlberg icons. Brighter, more inventive, electrifying, Stein heralded the coming of the free-wheeling freestyle heroes of the 1970s.

After two years at Heavenly, Stein moved to Aspen Highlands in 1959 after a handshake deal with owner Whip Jones. “I think,” says Stein, “that within an hour and a half I had bought Whip’s house in town, owned a new sport shop at Aspen Highlands, and had a ski school contract that was twice what I had at Heavenly Valley.” He was, at the very least, handily beating inflation.

High Noon at Highlands

Stein’s contract called for a swan dive every Sunday at high noon outside Highland’s mid-mountain Cloud Nine restaurant. Hundreds watched. There were so many cameras on the sidelines that Stein was photographed upside down more than any contemporary ski celebrity right side up. But it was not just the swan dive. Skiers in Aspen Mountain’s Copper Bowl would stop and stare as Stein went blazing by for the cameras in a series of changing, nearly impossible arabesques, cutting up the walls like a stunt motorcyclist riding the vertical sides of a velodrome. Major filmmakers arrived regularly for footage. Self-respecting ski publications had their “Stein fix” frequently.

Martie Sterling, a former owner of Heatherbed Inn at the Highlands, documented the passion for Stein sightings in her 1984 book *Days of Stein and Roses*. “Fawning, swooning females began spilling over onto our doorstep,” she wrote. “Folksingers composed paens to his symphonic grace. Whole families arrived, rushed to our office, and asked eagerly, ‘Where do we see Stein?’ It dawned on me that Stein was a world-class celebrity with a face as recognizable as Dwight D. Eisenhower’s and a whole lot prettier, who was besieged by autograph hounds and who attracted big crowds of panting, paying customers.”

Aspen’s own troubadour, guitarist Bob Gibson, daily belted out his favorite lyric, “Oh, they called him Superskier when he sat around the Sun Deck,” and listen-



Training on Aspen’s Buckhorn for the 1950 World Championships.

ers knew that he meant Aspen’s incomparable Stein. “On skis,” wrote Martie Sterling, “the man was a cross between Super Spider and a descending angel. Any Sunday, at high noon, with the elan of a Flying Wallenda, he would wave jauntily to the crowd and at length roar down the course, hit the jump, stretch into a Swan and land to thunderous applause.” On the other hand, Stein never insisted on always being at the center of attention. In the 1960s, just for fun, Stein raced on Friedl Pfeifer’s newly minted pro circuit, reuniting with old adversaries like Christian Pravda. Ten years out of world class skiing, Stein was happy running gates again. It made no difference that he usually lost to younger racers like Pepi Gramshammer.

In 1964, after five years in Aspen, Stein moved on, signing an even more lucrative contract with resort owner Damon Gadd to head the Sugarbush ski school in Waitsfield, Vt. The October 1964 issue of *Ski* declared Stein’s move to Sugarbush as “one of skiing’s most discussed post-Olympic events.”

Stein was making a basketful of money. His flair for merchandising kept him on magazine covers, sweater labels, Chapstick ads—name it. No one else appeared in so many ads in the print media, on so many television programs, so many lecture circuit films, or in so many magazine stories. And no one else seemed to be making nearly as much money out of being a ski instructor. A friend at the time estimated that Stein was earning an unheard-of \$50,000 a year (\$425,000 today) during his Sugarbush years. But he earned his pay. Sugarbush reaped a rich harvest of publicity and cut a huge fall-line trail (still there), “Stein’s Run,” designed as a place for Stein to

showboat. He has mellowed with the years but, back then, when this writer first met him, he was a man of passionate ideas and strong opinions, not likely to take kindly to disagreement. In his Sugarbush days, an instructor there, when asked what he thought of Stein, replied, "He is friendly—for a god."

Photographing Stein on the hill could be a bit like penning a racehorse in the starting gate—impatient for the run, his energy seething. But he was straight as they come, not much for playing a role. What you saw is what you got—Stein.

Sugarbush was not the end of the ladder. Stein was still headed up. In 1968, at age 40, after four years at Sugarbush, he signed his biggest contract ever with Bill Janss at Snowmass, and he was back in Aspen. Here he made his biggest financial coup, at a time when real estate prices in Aspen were still at the believable level. Aspen's pioneer architect, Herbert Bayer, asked Stein if he were interested in buying half of the block in downtown Aspen where Stein's ski shop stood. Bayer said he would finance the purchase, so Stein said yes and eventually bought the rest of the building that today could handily be mortgaged to cover the purchase of a modest ski resort.

In 1972, after four years at Snowmass, Stein went to his sixth U.S. resort, in Utah, where his friend Edgar Stern was backing the expansion in Park City of what had been a local ski area and what would eventually become Park City Resort. Stein eventually owned a ski shop, a rental shop and a new home there. "Stein has always had incredible timing," said Paul Wicks, then a Salt Lake City ski equipment sales rep. "He always moves where the new action is. And when he moves, his name is magic. The minute he landed in Park City, the real

estate values started going up and so did the lift tickets."

The early fortunes of Park City were tied to its condo development and, when sales faltered, Stein made a deal to stay on as director of skiing—working with the marketing department rather than the ski school to publicize Park City. It was a relief for all concerned. Reverse technique was now considered old-fashioned and was being

replaced throughout instructordom by a rather inelegant, skis-apart, square-stance "gorilla turn," which Stein wanted to have as little as possible to do with.

In 1977, Stein once again signed with Edgar Stern, then founding Deer Valley on the slopes adjoining Park City. Stein became director of skiing and for the two winters before the lifts went up, he daily led snowcats carrying 20 or so journalists and potentially influential skiers around to show them the delights of the terrain. When Deer Valley opened, Stein was given management of a fine guest lodge that bears his name. He owns a ski shop and in-house ski rental and fashion shops at Stein Eriksen's Lodge and Deer Valley's Chateaux at Silver Lake. He and Françoise, his wife of many years, have a son, Bjorn, who pitch-



Stein pops his high-noon swan somersault at Aspen Highlands, 1959.

es in after his classes at Westminster College in Salt Lake City to help Stein run his enterprises. Stein's 25-year stretch as Director of Skiing at Deer Valley shows no sign of ending anytime soon.

The last time this writer saw Stein was during the meeting of the International Skiing History Congress in Utah last year. Deer Valley laid on a banquet and Stein was there, signing posters of himself with great gusto, handing them out to attending Europeans and Americans alike. The next day, he was off skiing with a flock of veteran journalists and ski historians, eager to see if they could ski, just once, like Stein. ❄

The Battle of Fifth Avenue

Boston was the first, in 1935, with an indoor winter sports show. Leave it up to New Yorkers—and their retailer rivals—to up the ante.

By Allen Adler

Rattly snow trains chugged northward every weekend out of Boston and New York, conveying hordes of skiers of varying degrees of incompetence to plug away at the mysteries of the Adlberg stem turn. These were the "Ski Heil" years of the early Thirties and a relatively new winter sport had captured the fancy of many city dwellers.

In November 1935, the Boston Garden mounted its first Winter Sports Show, featuring many of the most noted skiers of the day, a roster of skiing's legends, including skimeister Hannes Schneider, Benno Rybizka, Otto Lang, Sig Buchmayr, Alfred Nachbaur and Charlie Proctor, all demonstrating the proper way to slide downhill. On the jumping side were Strand Mikkelsen, Anton Lekang, who did some of the announcing from the rafters, and Clem Curtis, who still lives in Stowe. The indoor ski hill was 85 feet wide by 200 feet long and was covered with 500 tons of shaved ice.

The show fired up enthusiasm for an exciting outdoor activity that was growing by leaps and bounds—or, more appropriately, by gelandesprungs. Attendance was so great that Boston opened its second such exhibition the following winter. Not to be left in the lurch, New York opened the doors of Madison Square Garden to its first Winter Sports Show in December 1936.

Most of the stars of the Boston show appeared to demonstrate and perform on manmade hill and pond. It, too, was a smash hit. When New York put on its second show in 1937, a clipping from the *Brooklyn Eagle* dated Dec. 5, 1937, noted "...Last year some 80,000 persons packed the famous Eighth Avenue Arena to witness the most spectacular sports project ever attempted indoors." It went on to note that the last three nights of the previous year's show were complete sell-outs with thousands being turned away at the door. The price of a program book was 25 cents. In the throes of the Great Depression, the price was right. Despite the hard economic times, those caught up in the skiing frenzy did what they could to carry on.

Entrepreneurs took quick note of the growing phenomenon. There was ski equipment and clothing to



Throngs of show-goers packed Madison Square Garden in 1936 to witness the derring-do of the day's legendary sliders.

be displayed and marketed. In 1935, Saks Fifth Avenue set up a 60-foot ski slide made of carpeted wood sprinkled with Borax. The store engaged "...four famous Austrian instructors, schooled in the Alberg (sic) method. Among them Sig Buchmayr and Tony Novak..."—that from a full page ad in the *New York Times* of Nov. 8, 1936. Under a sketch of a skiing woman it notes "Ski Headquarters of the Second Opening of the Famous Indoor Ski Slide," further noting that "Last year, Saks Fifth Avenue was the first to startle and delight New Yorkers by building an indoor ski slide..." The latest ski fashions from Europe were advertised as having been brought back to Saks by no other than Kate Peckett of that renowned Sugar Hill hotel that featured authentic Arlberg instruction under the direction of, you guessed it, Sig Buchmayr. John Allen writes in his book *From Skisport to Skiing*, "Overheard [in 1936] in the Club Room of the Laurentide Inn at Ste. Agathe des Monts were two New York women. 'Where did you learn to ski?' 'At Saks Fifth Avenue, my dear.'"

John Wanamaker's, another top-drawer Fifth Avenue retailer, had placed a full-page ad some two weeks later, extolling the delights of "Wanamaker's Great Ski Slide." It



depicted a ski slide bordered by Tyrolean-like cottages. The ad further notes that the new slide is 80 feet long and that great pains were taken to employ the certified Swiss instructor Remy Morosani.

A *New York Daily News* story of Dec. 6, 1935 by that newspaper's sports columnist, Paul Gallico, states that because he would be covering the forthcoming Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, he, Gallico, repairs dutifully to the sixth floor of a Fifth Avenue department store (unnamed) where an indoor ski slide has been constructed and, under the critical eye of Prof. Sig

Buchmayr, he climbs up, slides down, falls down, climbs up, slides down and falls down again in a praiseworthy attempt to familiarize himself with the

growing sport. Gallico further notes that the slide is made of wood, 60 feet long (probably why Wanamaker's went to 80 feet) with a 10-foot drop. It is carpeted and sprinkled with Borax powder, which, as Gallico reports, is fine except that when you fall down there is a solid thud instead of a squish.

So there you have it—fun and games in the Big Apple during the mid-1930s Depression. In 1936, Saks was into its second year with the 60-foot slide—so Wanamaker's played one-upmanship with its new 80-foot slide. But Saks had Sig, which Wanamaker's couldn't trump. ✱



Buchmayr and Kurt Thalhammer show their stuff at Saks, 1936.



International Skiing History Association Twelfth Annual Benefit Gathering

March 31–April 6, 2003

Chateaux at Silver Lake, Deer Valley, Utah

Monday – March 31, 2003

Registration: Chateaux at Silver Lake, Deer Valley
Evening: Welcome Reception – Chateaux at Silver Lake

Tuesday – April 1, 2003

Continental breakfast for all ISHA hotel guests
Registration for late arrivals
Skiing at Deer Valley
Dinner on own

Wednesday – April 2, 2003

Continental breakfast for all ISHA hotel guests
Skiing at The Canyons and Deer Valley
Tour of Joe Quinney Winter Sports Center/Alf Engen Ski Museum
Evening: Cocktail reception and dinner at Joe Quinney Winter Sports Center; Stein Eriksen, speaker

Thursday – April 3, 2003

Arrival day for three-day package guests
Continental breakfast for all ISHA hotel guests
Skiing at Alta/Snowbird
Lunch at Alta's Albion Grille
Evening: Mason Beekley Ski History Lecture Night; cocktail reception and dinner at Cliff Lodge, Snowbird; Dr. Greg Thompson, speaker

Friday – April 4, 2003

Continental breakfast for all ISHA hotel guests
Morning: ISHA Board meeting, Chateaux at Silver Lake
Skiing at Deer Valley
Evening: Dinner on own

Saturday – April 5, 2003

Continental breakfast for all ISHA hotel guests
Morning: ISHA Board meeting, Chateaux at Silver Lake
Skiing at Park City Mountain Resort
Tour of the Utah Ski Archives at the University of Utah, Marriott Library
Evening: Awards and Benefit Banquet at Alta Club in Salt Lake City; Myles Rademan, speaker

Sunday – April 6, 2003

Continental breakfast and departure

Special Promotion: Gathering Week Only

ISHA membership/SKIING HERITAGE subscription (during Gathering week only): \$25. Includes ISHA membership for one year, subscription to quarterly journal *SKIING HERITAGE* and invitation to all Gathering events at member price. Contact Allison Kimmerle, ISHA Coordinator, (860) 738-7788, e-mail isha@snet.net.

Rossignol Museum Visits Las Vegas



By Seth Masia

Reindeer have big, soft hooves that work like snowshoes, explains Gilbert Merlin. "They move fast over any kind of snow. Prehistoric hunters and herders needed skis to catch them." Merlin pulls out of his briefcase the photo of a cave painting—a hunter on skis creeping up behind a large quadruped.

Merlin is curator of the skiing history exhibit at the Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble, and for the second year he brought the Rossignol collection of historically significant skis to the Las Vegas ski industry trade show. Merlin's understanding of ski history is broad and profound, but his passion appears to be for Pleistocene.

This year's Rossignol collection consisted of nearly 170 skis, beginning with the reproduction of a short, fat wooden snowshoe dating to about 600 B.C. (the original, found in Norway, is too fragile to move), and ending with a pair of Bode Miller's giant slalom skis. The earliest "real" item is a farmer's ski from Arene, Norway, dated to 1680. Twenty-two skis are of non-Rossignol origin. Among these,

Merlin has a couple of favorites.

The first is a California Long Board racing ski from the Gold Rush days. Merlin loves to put it base-to-base with a modern 240cm Rossignol KL speed-record ski: The two skis are the same length, the



Merlin displays a replica of a Norwegian "snowshoe" used in 600 B.C.

same width and pretty much the same shape—that is, straight. The Long Board lacks a plastic base and steel edges, of course, but the sole has been carved into a long tunnel, like a

modern water ski. This is clearly designed to funnel air under the base, in much the way a modern slalom water ski works. That was the way to achieve top speed in the soggy Sierra Cement of 1867—that and ski wax made from beeswax, whale oil, pine tar and spermaceti, the fragrant, waxy substance harvested from the heads of sperm whales.

Another favorite is one of the world's first metal skis, designed by one M. Joseph Vicky and built in 1934. (The Musée Dauphinois has an earlier aluminum ski dating from 1928, but it wasn't brought to Las Vegas.) In length and shape the Vicky ski would look right at home on the mountain today. The running surface is a simple sheet of duralumin (a tough alloy kept secret by the Germans up to World War I), with a pattern of gripper wedges machined into the sole, predating the Trak wax-less base by nearly 35 years. Flex is controlled by a long wooden rib, fixed under the binding mount and floating at its ends near the tip and tail. Any ski designer would recognize this instantly as the Derbyflex principle or the Salomon ProLink system.

The theme of the exhibit, of course,



is Rossignol's corporate history. Eugene Rossignol (1856-1903) launched the family business, manufacturing shuttles for the weaving mills in Voiron. On his death, his son Abel Rossignol assumed control. According to the English text accompanying the exhibit, the French Army was then becoming interested in skis for maneuvering in the Alps. Abel's friend Lt. Gelinet was stationed with the 159th Alpine Regiment at Briançon (see "The French Connection," Second Issue 2000). In 1905, the regiment carved and steamed their own skis—

apparently the first volume production of skis in France.

During the winter of 1907 Rossignol and Gelinet made a tour through Norway to visit ski makers and, on their return, Rossignol set up a small workshop to make skis of solid ash. By 1909 he was mass-producing skis in ash and hickory and selling them to sports clubs (including the Club Alpin de

France) and to the Army.

A turning point came in 1936, when Emile Allais skied on Rossignols at the Garmisch Olympics and won the bronze medal in alpine combined—there were no separate medals in downhill and slalom until, in 1937, Allais became FIS World Champion, winning gold in downhill, slalom and, of course, combined. In 1941, Abel Rossignol *filed* patented a new laminating process and, with it, introduced the Olympic 41, which would become the pattern for

Rossignol slalom skis until 1964.

European factories were slow to acquire the flexible glues that allowed Howard Head to glue aluminum to steel in 1948. Rossignol's first aluminum ski, the Metallais of 1957, was riveted together. It led to the Allais 60, on which Jean Vuarnet won the gold medal in downhill at the Squaw Valley Olympics in 1960. The first Rossignol ski molded with a polymer resin (but without fiberglass) was the Jean Vuarnet recreational model in 1962; it led to the fiberglass Slalom Plume, progenitor of the classic Strato, in 1963. The first fully glued metal ski was the Allais Major in 1965, and the Strato followed in 1966.

Rossignol didn't count visitors to the exhibit, but estimates are that perhaps 3,000 people passed through. From Las Vegas, the exhibit went back to Grenoble. There are no firm plans to return it to North America until, perhaps, the Las Vegas show in January, 2004. ✱

Join ISHA's Skiing History Forum

The ISHA website's Skiing History Forum, launched in October, is picking up steam. As this is written, the on-line bulletin board contains nearly 60 messages organized in two dozen topics, from "Why are Picabo and Tommy Moe not in the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame?" to "Building a rope tow."

Queries come in from students and from people who, while exploring grandma's attic, stumble across odd trophies or items of ski equipment and would like them identified. Mort Lund has taken on the lion's share of responding to Forum queries. We'd like to see more participation by ISHA members.

Getting signed up for the Forum takes a little work, but if you ever mastered riding a rope tow you should have the requisite determination. Fortunately, you only need to go through this procedure once. Here's how:

- Go to <http://skiinghistory.org>. Click on the link "Visit the Ski History Forum."
- At the Forum page, click on the "Log In" link, which you'll find directly below the SkiNet.Com logo.
- At the "Welcome to the Boards" page, click on the "Sign Up" button.
- At the "Join Our Boards" page, fill out the form. You should compose your own Username and Password, and you'll need to enter your e-mail address. At the bottom of the form, click the "Sign Up" button.

• You'll next arrive at a page entitled "You're Almost Done." Just click on the OK button and you'll be taken back to the Skiing History Forum page, but don't stop here. Instead:

- Go to your e-mail tool. Within a minute or two you'll receive an e-mail from boardsadm@timeinc.net. Open this message and click on the URL provided.
- Now, finally, you'll come to "Welcome to the Boards." Enter your Username and Password and click on the "Log In" button.
- Here you are, back at the Skiing History Forum page. But now that you have full member privileges, you'll see a discrete button on the right side of the page labeled "Start a Topic."

• To launch a new discussion, click "Start a Topic." You'll come to a page for entering a topic title and a text box.

Next time you come back to the Forum, you can enter as a full member simply by clicking on the "Log In" link. Enter your Username and Password, and you're in!

Incidentally, anyone can read the Forum, but you have to be a Forum member to initiate or respond to messages. Once you've signed up, and logged in, whenever you view a message, a form appears below the message—you can use that form to compose a question or post a reply. —Seth Masia

The Ahwahnee: Yosemite Grandeur

An Iowan's grit and vision opened California's Yosemite Valley to skiing—and a grand hotel was the lynchpin of it all.

By Gene Rose

It is nearly 20 miles from Yosemite's famed Ahwahnee Hotel to the Badger Pass ski area, but down the years the two landmarks have enjoyed a unique partnership.

Today, the Ahwahnee (from the Miwok word "Ahwahneechee," the dwellers of the Valley) stands alongside the great inns of America, continuing to lure skiers and other park visitors to its warm embrace.

It was a much different scene during the dark days of 1927, just after the prestigious hotel—a magnificent structure with its granite facade, beamed ceilings and massive stone hearths, built at a then staggering cost of one million dollars (nearly double the architect's original estimate)—opened its doors. As the hotel moved into the fall season, the guests trickled away and the red ink started flowing, prompting some officials of the lessees, the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., to recommend that the new hotel be closed for winter.

Then Sir Lancelot, in the form of an enterprising Yosemite Park and Curry Co. executive from Iowa, stepped forward with a miraculous cure—an elixir based on skiing and winter sports.

While a stumbling skier, Don Tresidder knew how to make the right turns in the business world. Arriving in the park in 1914 with only a few dollars in his pocket, the young visitor from Iowa, with several hotels or overnight facilities in the park at the time, managed to obtain a summer job as a porter. Over the following summers, he not only established himself at Yosemite but, through those contacts, gained entrance to Stanford University as a pre-med student.

One of the early advocates of a luxury hotel for Yosemite was Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service. Right after World War I, Mather sought to improve overnight accommodations in the park as a way of building public support for the fledgling National Park Service. But



Sailors relax on the Ahwahnee lawn in 1943. The hotel served as a Naval convalescent center during the war years.

Mather had other reasons, particularly after several prominent Yosemite visitors, including Lady Astor, refused to stay in the park because of its shoddy overnight facilities.

Returning to the park each summer, the tall and personable Tresidder soon zeroed in on Mary Curry, the very eligible daughter of Yosemite concessionaire David Curry. After wooing and marrying the young lady, Tresidder gradually moved up the company ladder. But instead of practicing medicine, the young doctor began addressing the financial health of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., assuming its presidency in 1926.

Recognizing the need to fill empty rooms in the fall, winter and spring months at the company's hotels—Camp Curry, Yosemite Lodge and the Sentinel Hotel among them—Tresidder looked at the options. Recalling an earlier trip to Europe, where he and his new wife had been exposed to skiing, Tresidder saw the future, and it was year-round use of the company's facilities based on winter sports. Not surprisingly, the grand Ahwahnee and skiing would be central to his ambitious plans.

But getting the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. to accept the financial burden of building a hotel became a major stumbling block. Once that hurdle was surmounted—largely by Tresidder's ability to orchestrate every design, construction and budget detail and bring all the components together—construction of the Ahwahnee moved ahead in the spring of 1926. When the hotel opened its doors in July 1927, it did so to enthusiastic reviews, billed as "one of the great hotels of America." But despite the glowing reports and a new, all-weather highway into the park, the hotel soon fell into the autumn slump.



Don and Mary Tresidder, exploring Yosemite's trails.

It was at that point that Tresidder unveiled his administrative skills—and his ambitious winter sports agenda. Appealing to the board of directors, he laid out a new business plan. An elaborate ice rink and toboggan run were constructed and a small ski slope was cleared. Other facilities, such as a ski and skate rental shop were added, all with the idea of lur-

ing winter visitors to the park.

At the time, Tresidder and his wife saw skiing as ski touring, utilizing some existing and new overnight facilities, which would allow skiers to gain access to the majestic Yosemite high country. The famed Mountain House on Glacier Point was winterized and made ready for guests. A series of small ski chalets were constructed on the North Rim of Yosemite Valley, allowing guests to ski from one to the other.

The Tresidders brought in ski and skating instructors from Europe and Canada, establishing one of the first ski schools in North America. A winter carnival and competitions were organized, attracting teams from across the West. They prevailed upon Governor James Rolf Jr. to launch a winter pageant, eclipsing other winter carnivals held across the country. Of course, the Ahwahnee would serve as the centerpiece of these activities.

To sustain this momentum, Tresidder organized the Yosemite Winter Club with the help of his growing circle of influential friends. The Club laid out a busy calendar of sport and social activities. The Winter Club banquet, staged in the great lounge of the Ahwahnee, soon became another highlight of the winter season. At its peak, the Club's membership numbered nearly a thousand.

To help publicize winter sports and the Ahwahnee, Tresidder found some able assistants, foremost of whom was a young, struggling photographer by the name of Ansel Adams, who produced the park's publicity photos—and became an able skier. Among other things, Adams orchestrated a Yuletide pageant for the Ahwahnee, the Bracebridge Dinner, based on Washington Irving's sketch *An Old-Fashioned Christmas*. The extravagan-

za, a great success, remains an Ahwahnee tradition today.

After attending the 1928 Winter Games at St. Moritz, Don and Mary Tresidder had another vision. With the 1932 Winter Games slated for the United States, the two saw gold and silver. Soon thereafter, Yosemite—along with Lake Tahoe—made a bid to host the first U.S. Winter Olympics. But even the grand Ahwahnee could not alter the course of ski history. Yosemite and Lake Tahoe lost the bid after the California Chamber of Commerce failed to support the bids, not wanting to acknowledge that the Golden State had snow.

In 1929, after a bitter contest, Lake Placid was selected as the site for the third Winter Olympics. But it was something of a bittersweet victory for the New Yorkers. Downhill events were not included in the 1932 Winter Games, there was little snow in the East that winter, jumpers were leaping onto slopes covered with hay, and the cross-country skiers had to make their way over a narrow path of snow trucked in from other areas. Meanwhile, at Yosemite, skiers were cavorting in 12 feet of snow.

Tresidder was a man of all seasons, but winter became his favorite. He went to great lengths to lure visitors to the snow-laden park. "Get them in," he coached his staff, "and make them happy."

In time, both Tresidder and his wife became avid skiers. Mary, in particular, ranged all over the park's backcountry, having contracted what she described as a very infectious "ski virus." While their efforts to promote ski touring went nowhere, a new downhill trail at Chinquapin was cleared (midway between Yosemite Valley and Badger Pass, it served briefly as a downhill site until Badger Pass could be completed). The Tresidders soon found their hotel rooms filled with downhill skiers and skaters.



The Ahwahnee's Great Lounge mirrors the hotel's grand and exquisite scale.

To better serve those skiers, Tresidder ordered the construction of the Badger Pass ski house in 1934, the first major facility in North America devoted exclusively to downhill skiing. Some 20 miles away and 3,000 feet higher, it had (and still has) no overnight facilities. Guests were transported then, as now, by shuttles back and forth during the day to one of three overnight facilities in Yosemite Valley—the Ahwahnee, of course, being the preferred hotel.

With Badger Pass in place, winter use at Yosemite made giant strides, further establishing the park's reputation as a winter sports center. The marriage of the hotel and the ski area helped lure the rich and famous. Hollywood stars—Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks and Madeline Carroll—added their glamour. Chaplin even perfected a somersault on skis, which put him at the cutting edge of what would come to be known as freestyle skiing. And during the summer season, kings, queens and presidents checked in, adding to the Ahwahnee's crown status.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Yosemite skiing reached new frontiers. A long line of accomplished skiers—Hannes Schroll, Sigi Engl, Alf Engen, Charlie Proctor, Dave McCoy and Luggi Foeger among them—regularly skied the slopes at Badger Pass, and many went on to direct its ski school. Yosemite skier Bill Jans managed to make the 1940 Olympic ski team, only to see World War II dash his dreams of competing. Brynhild Grassmoen and Boots Blatt made the 1948 team. Even Sir Arnold Lunn, the father of modern slalom racing, recognized Yosemite's preeminence when he sponsored the Far West Kandahar at Badger Pass, a competition that was shared with Mount Hood.

The first professional ski instructor in the park was Jules Fritsch, a Swiss national. Ralph dePhyffer of Canada served as both a skating and ski instructor. The famed Hannes Schroll arrived in 1936 and displaced Fritsch as head ski instructor. Schroll eventually moved to the Sugar Bowl and was followed by Luggi Foeger, who arrived via St. Anton and Grey Rocks, Quebec.

During the latter part of World War II, the Ahwahnee was turned over to the U.S. Navy as a rehabilitation hospital. By that time, Tresidder, after being named president of Stanford University, had moved on. At one point he was being pushed into the political arena as a future California senator. But then fate intervened. In January 1948, Tresidder was felled by a heart attack.

Mary Tresidder continued her love affair with skiing and

the Ahwahnee Hotel. For many years she occupied the exclusive fifth-floor penthouse of the hotel, which became known as the "Tresidder Suite." She died in 1970.

In the winter of 1948, a young Canadian by the name of Nic Fiore joined Luggi Foeger's ski school. After arriving at nearby Merced by train, Fiore was picked up and driven to Yosemite late at night in the middle of a blinding snow storm. Arriving near midnight, he was assigned a room and retired for the night, unaware of the surrounding landscape. The following morning he stepped out into dazzling sunlight and saw the snow-covered splendor of Yosemite Valley. The storm had broken. The big walls were

coated with fresh snow. Fiore was stunned by the awesome beauty of the valley. But he was also troubled; all he could see were the valley's steep, vertical walls.

At that moment, Foeger arrived to show Fiore around. "But Luggi," Fiore asked, "where do the beginners ski?" unaware of Badger's gentle slopes some 20 miles away.

As with his predecessors, Fiore went on to play a major role in Yosemite skiing—as well as the Yosemite Winter Club. As head ski instructor, Fiore wore many hats. For endless summers, he ran the remote high-country camps.

Now the grand old man of Yosemite skiing, Fiore believes the Ahwahnee helped change

the perception of winter, and thereby played a pivotal role in the development of American skiing.

"People discovered that winter could not only be enjoyable," he says, "but delightful...especially when they stayed at the Ahwahnee."

In 2000, after more than 40 Yosemite winters, Fiore stepped down as head instructor to become "Skiing Ambassador" of Badger Pass, a position he still holds.

During the 1970s, the National Park Service considered removing all overnight facilities from Yosemite Valley in an attempt to "de-urbanize" the valley. That effort, fortunately, went nowhere. In 1987, the Park Service's suggestion to "deconstruct" the Ahwahnee was all but forgotten after the lodge was added to the National Register of Historic Sites.

You can still see, and experience, the Ahwahnee—a perfect balance of refinement, grandeur and hospitality—to this day. ✱

Gene Rose, a member of the ISHA Board and a veteran journalist who has reported on Yosemite for 25 years, is the author of Magic Yosemite Winter, a history of winter sports in the park.



Nic Fiore, ski school director when this 1970s photo was taken, is today Skiing Ambassador at Badger Pass.

ISHA DONORS 2002

More than 230 individuals and ski companies have graciously responded with donations to the International Skiing History Association over the past year. ISHA's mission is to preserve and advance the knowledge of ski history, and to increase public awareness of the sport's heritage. The principal means of fulfilling this mission is to publish *SKIING HERITAGE* and to offer the most extensive website (www.skiinghistory.org) dedicated to the sport's history. Both efforts involve the considerable costs of

research, editing and writing. Subscription revenue falls far short of covering our costs. You can help by making a gift. ISHA is a 501(c)(3) corporation, so your donation is tax-deductible. Send your check to the International Skiing History Association, P.O. Box 324, New Hartford, CT 06057. Gifts of stock and bequests are also ways in which you can contribute.

We would like to acknowledge the following for their generous support over the past year.

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Portillo: Historic Queen of the Southern Hemisphere

It was a daunting task, but after 20 years the railroad reached Portillo. Then it took a World Championships, a world speed record and the grit of three gringos to bring the place to life.

By Morten Lund

A strange thing happens to American travelers flying to Chile in the summer. They arrive in winter. This transformation of the seasons through transportation of the traveler underlies the success of the historic Portillo ski resort, situated south of the equator some 60 miles northeast of the capital of Santiago. The success has been considerable, an interesting journey of some 70 years from status as one of the oldest ski areas in South America to status as the most cosmopolitan resort in the Americas, at least for a time.

To jog back to the origins: In 1887, it all began with a difficult project—building a railway from isolated central Chile across the Andes to Argentina. The Chilean government hired an English engineering firm to study the feasibility of building the rail to the eventual destination at Buenos Aires, a distribution center for the entire South American market. The initial plan was to crest the Uspallata Pass between the towns of Los Andes in Chile and Mendoza in Argentina. The government of Chile committed itself to financing the project, no matter what. It took 20 years to launch and finish the immensely complicated construction. English engineers on the job spread the word of the eminently desirable, often-replenished snow that made the crest of the Andes a veritable ski-mountaineering paradise.

Regular service on the trans-Andean route began in 1910. Recreational skiers—some of them from abroad—seized the opportunity (rare at the time) that mechanical transport into heavenly terrain offered, arriving at the Santiago train station, then taking the eastbound trans-Andean narrow gauge. Most skiers debarked at Portillo—“Little Pass” in Spanish. The immediate area was recognized as premier ski terrain, a set of slopes lying at 9,300 feet running down to the shore of the sizable peak-bound Lake of the Incas.

Chilean ski clubs were formed to exploit this marvelous skiing, and they began to pop up here and there in the cities of the plain. In response to demand, sometime in the 1930s, a handful of skiers installed the first lift at Portillo—a short platterpull that brought the future more clearly into focus.

At the same time, the railroad built the first hotel by



Portillo's first single chair, one of two built in 1948-49 by the Chilean government, with the Grand Hotel Portillo below.

adding a long wing to the existing large stone *refugio* already standing at Portillo near the track. The wing held 300 beds in dorms and private rooms to create the “Hotel Portillo.” Not elegant, but no matter. A stream of hard-bitten ski mountaineers from Europe began arriving in almost as great a number as the Chileans themselves, but very few Americans came: Portillo was publicized little in the U.S. But there were enough skiers that the hotel management felt it worthwhile to import European instructors.

In 1937, an American team of skiers arrived in Chile to compete in the Pan American Games. The races were held at Farellones, some 40 miles from Santiago. Portillo was excluded, possibly because—as journalist David Judson noted in the 1938-39 *American Ski Annual*—trains reached Portillo only twice a week and rooms had to be booked months in advance.

Judson also noted that a gasoline-powered 20-passenger flat car met the train at the Juncal station and, for \$4 (\$40

in today's dollars), took skiers up the remaining three miles to Portillo.

Evidently, business at Portillo was promising enough that, in 1941, a group of investors, The Hoteles de Cordillera SA, installed a 900-foot platterpull and planned an ambitious hotel. But the project went slowly and failed to attract enough investment to finish the interior, so the hotel was left standing empty until 1946.

But all was not lost. In 1946, the Corporation for the Development of the Chilean Government arrived on the scene. The bureaucrats finished the hotel for the 1948 season. The result was a fetching 125-room modern hotel sanguinely named the Grand Hotel Portillo. It featured an avalanche-proof cement structure accommodating 325 guests. It was an interesting piece of architecture, modern for its time, with an impressive, curved facade. Its six stories were distinguished by the addition of sun balconies outside each floor. The Grand Hotel was at least the equal of the Sun Valley Lodge in Idaho and the Ahwahnee in Yosemite as a ranking European-style resort in the Americas.

The government built two single chairs, 1,000 and 3,000 feet in length, and a unique platterpull that went up one side of the hill and down the other, 750 feet on each side. All loading terminals were within skiing distance of the hotel in splendid proximity to food and drink. In deference to Portillo's copious snowfall, the architects had run a pedestrian tunnel from the hotel to the train station. In fact, the constant avalanche hazard persuaded the architects to dispense with free-standing restaurants, nightclubs and tourist shops. The old hotel remained as a barracks for the Chilean army mountain troops. There was no traditional ski village.

The enterprise therefore rose or sank on the charms of the Grand Hotel Portillo, which provided all the amenities of a modest ski village within its walls, including shops, a movie theater, stage, nightclub, several restaurants and a greater number of bars. As a final touch, the company had hired a celebrity ski instructor, world champion Emile Allais. During the alternate season, Allais directed the brand-new Squaw Valley, Calif., ski school. It added up to a ski vacation as a luxury cruise with the hotel serving as the ship and skiing as a bonus.

John Jay Brings News to the U.S.

Portillo was brought to the notice of American skiers in 1947 by filmmaker John Jay, who described the facilities in his book *Ski the Americas North and South*. Unfortunately, Jay had arrived in Chile while the Grand Hotel Portillo was still in the construction stage, but Jay did note that the Chilean government was to build a hotel that "promises to be the St. Moritz of South America." Jay also mentioned a current attraction, the gasoline-powered flatcar on the

trans-Andean track that David Judson had noted in 1938. It took skiers from Juncal back up to the hotel for another run—a unique funicular that created the only three-mile, lift-served slope in the Western Hemisphere.

Portillo had the makings of a small but heady international resort. What Portillo did not have was a handle on its major problem—the avalanches that closed off the railroad. In 1955, an avalanche shut down train service for eight straight days. This was particularly galling to one guest, Tom Corcoran, then a member of the Dartmouth ski team. Corcoran was due to report for summer naval training, and was forced to ski over untracked snow for 15 miles with his luggage strapped on his back to meet the train and avoid being AWOL from the Navy.

The grooming was fairly basic. Each snowfall called out



Portillo's original hotel, a stone refuge with wooden wing attached, later served as a barracks for the Chilean Army mountain troops.

the ski packing efforts of the entire ski school and several squads of Chilean mountain troops from the barracks. Guests even volunteered on occasion to speed the opening of their favorite slopes. Everyone was in the same boat, so to speak, a perception that led to a camaraderie that remained special to Portillo.

In 1953, the resort got a second brief shot of publicity in the U.S. when *Ski* magazine publisher Bill Eldred flew down to have a look. Eldred noted in his subsequent article for *Ski* in March 1954 that it took 19 hours to fly on a Panagra DC 6 from New York to Santiago. First-class roundtrip was \$975—nearly \$5,000 in today's dollars. The train from Santiago required another six hours. But transportation aside, Eldred had much to praise about Portillo. He noted that the hotel was "most luxurious," offering



Jean-Claude Killy, on his way to downhill gold at Portillo in 1966.

"accommodations from four-bed bunkrooms to private suites," and that "its atmosphere was most cosmopolitan. In addition to Spanish and English, Portuguese, Italian and German are often heard." Eldred wrote that Americans made up half the guests. Portillo had become a place for U.S. skiers who could afford the best.

Eldred observed that the skiing terrain ran, in degree of difficulty, from the gentle platterpull slope to the run under the chairlift through The Throat, terrain that tilted, at its steepest, some 40 degrees—about as steep as a slope can get and still hold snow. Eldred reported that a snow fence had been erected at one point "to keep skiers who had fallen from sliding to the bottom of the mountain."

Stein Arrives, Vacancies Still Plague

In 1957, Stein Eriksen, 1954 world champion and then head of the ski school at Heavenly Valley, Calif., took over the Portillo ski school for three years. Stein was certainly a draw at Portillo, but not draw enough. The hotel was losing the struggle to break even. By 1960, the government had closed the hotel, and it stood empty for a second time.

Then two willing buyers persuaded the Chileans to privatize: Bob Purcell and Dick Aldrich. Both had worked and traveled in Latin America for the Rockefeller Foundation subsidiary International Basic Economy. They were avid skiers and loved Portillo's great beauty and excellent skiing. They believed the resort had enormous potential, given sufficient investment. They hired Bob's nephew Henry Purcell, a 26-year-old graduate of the Cornell School of Hotel Administration who had worked

at various Hilton hotels as general manager and CEO.

"I think," says Purcell, "that I was the only relatively young, adventure-minded person they knew in the hotel business. I was tired of big-city hotel corporate life and jumped at the chance. I moved my family to Portillo, where I soon discovered that nearly everything I had learned about the hotel business at Cornell and with the Hilton chain was not going to be of much help."

Purcell hired 1952 Olympic gold medalist Othmar Schneider as ski school director in 1959 and engaged the New York ad agency Needham & Grohmann to promote Portillo. Purcell set about getting the hotel operation on its feet. The first step was to remove a large black sheep, called Lumumba, that resided in the main lounge. He hired housekeepers, bellboys and other support personnel from the plains and began training them for the 1960-61 season.

Needham & Grohmann masterminded an inaugural promotion in 1961. On June 15, a charter plane landed at Santiago carrying a number of U.S. skiers, among them David Rowan (associate publisher of *Ski* magazine), Howard Head, Ernst Engel, Alf Engen, Merrill Hastings (owner of *Skiing* magazine), Mrs. John Randolph Hearst (of the publishing family), Ernie McCulloch, Willi Schaeffler and Clif Taylor. Unfortunately, the dignitaries spent much of their first day in a tunnel, waiting for the railroad plow to clear an avalanche. The hotel staff had no idea how far down the track their guests were stalled. "As things stood," recalls Purcell, "communications were not much. There was only one phone line, Portillo One, with only one phone at the other end. The line worked fine in the summer but went out with the first snowstorm each winter. After a while, though, the train got through. Everyone had fun. The inaugural was a success."

Newsworthy events were scheduled, including, in 1963, the first speed record set in the Americas. Both Dick Dornworth of the U.S. ski team and C.B. Vaughn of the U.S. team were electronically timed at 171.428 kilometers per hour to set the first record in the Western Hemisphere. At that point, Henry Purcell decided that the resort needed a real shot in the arm to succeed. He believed the 1966 FIS World Championships were just the thing. It was a stunning idea and an almost impossible goal. At a minimum, it required mountains of persuasion—much of it by onetime Chilean ski champion Sergio Navarrete—in addition to much financial largesse and rock-ribbed guarantees. Henry Purcell and Portillo's owners managed to provide all that. "After a great deal of negotiating, politics and promises, and surely with serious misgivings on the part of the FIS," says Henry, "the races were awarded to the Chilean Ski Federation at Portillo."

Pomagalski built two chairlifts. The Chilean government installed additional phone lines. Temporary athlete housing was erected. With most of the changes in place, the FIS scheduled pre-championship races for August

1965 to test the courses and installations.

"Nature has a way of laughing at mankind in situations like this," recalls Purcell. On August 15, after the ski teams had arrived, a typhoon moved in from the South Pacific carrying winds up to 120 miles an hour and unmerciful amounts of snow. Five skiers were killed when an avalanche hit the employee housing. An avalanche took out the two new chairlifts, including the 4,800-foot Poma double chair, which lost 13 of its 24 towers, along with the top and bottom stations. The ski teams remained trapped at Portillo until the weather cleared, then had to ski out on the buried tracks to the nearest train station, 20 miles away.

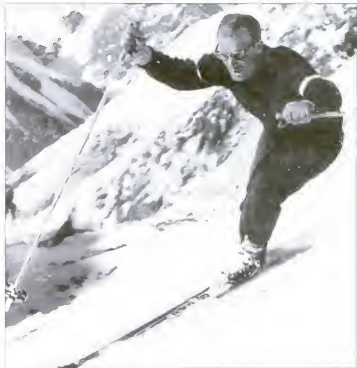
Purcell: The Championships Will Go On

The FIS was properly distressed. Its officials asked Bob Purcell and Dick Aldrich what they intended to do. There followed a great deal of soul-searching, safety studies, estimates of rebuilding cost and advice. Aldrich decided to sell his share to Bob Purcell, whose fervent belief in Portillo remained unshaken. He gave the FIS their answer. "We will rebuild and we will hold the 1966 World Ski Championship races in Portillo." The FIS agreed to let him try. Pomagalski sent Polish engineer Janek Kunzynski to rebuild the lifts. Portillo hired the northern hemisphere's top avalanche expert, Monty Atwater, to head the avalanche control program before and during the championships. The Chilean army offered Atwater artillery for avalanche control and a regiment of mountain troops to pack the runs. Othmar Schneider redesigned the layout of runs and lifts.

"We speeded up work on all the facilities. We begged, pleaded and negotiated every aspect of the event," says Bob Purcell. "Timing circuits, press facilities, communications networks and athlete housing were drawn, erected and finished during the course of an agonizingly long and hectic summer." The FIS finally gave the go-ahead. In August 1966, FIS President Marc Hodler arrived with Chilean President Eduardo Frei to inaugurate the first world-class ski event south of the equator.

Nature repented, providing clear skies and perfect snow. It was a great event, especially for the French, who began their unprecedented domination of international racing by winning 16 medals, including all the golds except for the men's slalom and women's downhill. (As a footnote, the French eventually won gold even in the women's downhill. The initial winner, Erika Schinegger, underwent a sex change operation and became a he. The FIS solved the dilemma by awarding France's Marielle Goitschel a tie.) Notably, Jean-Claude Killy began his collection of medals by winning the gold in the downhill and combined, and history was made when the FIS decided at their Portillo meeting to launch the first World Cup races in 1967.

The 1966 championships raised Portillo to its destiny as a successful international resort. Thousands of skiers began arriving every season to taste the joy of summer skiing.



Othmar Schneider, Portillo's ski school director in 1959, redesigned the lifts and runs for the World Championships in 1966.

Successive generations of U.S. national ski teams trained on its slopes. An errant Kennedy child was chased by the Chilean border police, Argentine polo players came to try their pluck on skis. Peruvian surfers brought their snowboards to the powder. Romances bloomed, new families were founded, and grandchildren appeared. Chile's communist government of 1973 discussed the nationalization of Portillo. Fidel Castro paid a long visit. And new speed records were set on the Portillo track in 1978 when Steve McKinney broke the barrier of 200 kilometers per hour and, in 1987, Michael Pruefer ran it up to 217.68.

Henry and his brother David then purchased Portillo from their uncle. Later on, when Portillo celebrated its 50th birthday in 1998, Henry Purcell had held the resort's reins for 38 of those years. Now 69, he has retired and turned over responsibilities to his 40-year old son, Miguel Purcell.

Portillo remains a boutique ski resort. Nobody gets up very early, meals are social events, dinner is late. There are no lift lines and not many ski the deep powder. Life is leisurely. Snowmaking equipment and grooming machines have replaced the Chilean mountain troops. There are now five chairlifts. The *Va et Vient* (French for "jigback lift") designed by Jean Pomagalski still take skiers to the high avalanche chutes across the Roca Jack. Portillo One is now a fat fiber optic cable and there is always an outside line available. The train no longer runs, but the loss of nostalgia for rail travel has been compensated for by the efficiencies of a hard-surface auto road that is easier to keep open in winter.

Most importantly, the skiers at Portillo are still the kind who make a ski week the sort of memorable occasion only experienced in the most elegant of cruises. ❄

Three Resort Builders Named to New Mexico Inaugural Ski Hall of Fame



Bob Nordhaus



Ernie Blake



Ben Abruzzo

New Mexico skiing pioneers Bob Nordhaus, Ernie Blake and Ben Abruzzo—three visionaries responsible for establishing the sport of skiing in New Mexico—were honored Jan. 23 as the first inductees into the newly created New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame.

Bob Parker, a member of both the Colorado and U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame and now a Santa Fe resident, has been the driving force behind the New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame. He is a founding member of the state's Winter Sports Alliance which, along with Ski New Mexico, helped bring into existence the New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame.

Bob Gets It Going

In 1935, Bob Nordhaus, today 93, trekked and skied the snow-covered slopes around what is today the Doc Long Picnic Ground in New Mexico's Sandia Mountains. Having formed the Albuquerque Ski Club, he inveigled the U.S. Forest Service into clearing a system of trails at La Madera in the Sandias. Club volunteers cobbled together two rope tows and the Civilian Conservation Corps built a lodge from trees that had been cut for the slopes. In 1939, La Madera hosted the state's first downhill race. When World War II began, Nordhaus joined the 10th Mountain Division. Returning to La Madera after the war, with investor funds he installed a T-bar, the longest in the country at the time. On opening day in 1946, newspapers called La Madera, today Sandia Peak, the first true ski center in the Southwest, with five miles of trails, a ski school, café, ice rink and overnight bunks for 50. Not yet satisfied, Nordhaus made several trips to Europe in the ensuing years to inspect lift installations. He returned convinced that a tramway, linking the west side of the Sandias to the ski area on the east, was the answer. In addition to the engineering complexities, there was the ornery matter of obtaining permits, property and money. Nonetheless, emboldened by the savvy of friend and soon-to-be partner Ben Abruzzo, construction began in 1964 and, two years later, Nordhaus took first flight on what was then the longest tram in the world.

Ernie's Grand Vision

Ernie Blake—born in Frankfurt and schooled in Switzerland—first became intrigued with the idea of skiing the American Rockies while he was recuperating from a ski accident in Italy. Emigrating to New York City in 1938, he took a job, selling and teaching skiing, at Saks Fifth Avenue. Ernie met his soon-to-be wife Rhoda in 1942. After he returned from service in the war, he and Rhoda made the decision to live in New Mexico, so they headed for Santa Fe in 1949. Once there, Ernie scouted the area in his plane and made a detour toward Taos. It was there that he discovered his dream, in an area called Twining. Although the terrain was discredited by others as isolated, inaccessible and too steep, Ernie pursued his hunch and moved Rhoda and their three children into a 16-foot trailer in the valley, leased the land, and started his ski area in 1956. A master at public relations—irascible and charismatic to the end—Ernie died in 1989, but not before the mystique of Taos Ski Valley had spread world-wide.

Ben's 'Impossible' Skyway

Ben Abruzzo first skied La Madera in 1952. In 1957 he was hired to manage the area and a year later bought half its assets in the first of what would become a long string of projects—including the Sandia Peak Tramway—with his new partner, Bob Nordhaus. Abruzzo went on to own and operate Ski Santa Fe, but his greatest accomplishment was the building of the tramway with Bob Nordhaus—considered an impossible feat at the time. Abruzzo, who was also a world-record-setting balloonist, died in a plane crash in 1985.*

The Hall of Fame will be located in the Sandia Peak Tramway building. A fitting home, it lies at the base of the state's oldest ski area and in one of the state's most recognized attractions, created by Bob Nordhaus and Ben Abruzzo.

The Ski Trade Show

After 50 years, suppliers and retailers still debate the best time to sell and buy next season's merchandise. Here are the people who made it work.

By Seth Masia

In 1950, 10th Mountain Division veteran Nicholas Hock had a job selling advertising, and writing a monthly ski column, for *Sports Age* magazine in New York. At the end of January 1951, he traveled to Chicago to attend the National Sporting Goods Association convention, and was discouraged to find his ski business buddies "twiddling their thumbs" among the ball-and-bat vendors. Very few ski retailers were able to attend the show because of the mid-winter timing.

Back in Manhattan, Hock called on J. Andrew Squires, president of Squires Advertising. Squires represented a number of *Sports Age* advertisers. More to the point, he operated the China and Art Trade Show in Pittsburgh.

"I went to Squires and said there's room for a ski trade show, and we ought to do something about it," Hock recalls. "We talked and talked, and he said 'I'll put out a mailing if you give me the names.' I was a silent partner."

The first National Winter Sports Trade Show opened on May 24, 1953, at the Hotel New Yorker, and it drew about 50 exhibitors—manufacturers and importers of sleds, skates, snowshoes and ski gear.

"It was 90 degrees in the hotel corridors with all the windows open," Hock says. "Business activity was, well, quiet. But there was enough life to do it again. I made maybe \$400 or \$500 on the show."

While exhibitors, who were stuck in the overheated hotel rooms, grumbled about the timing, visiting retailers liked being able to write all their

orders in one place. Ralph ("Doc") and Toby Des Roches, who ran a ski area and shop in Ligonier, Pa., came to that first show and loved it. "We were able to do all our buying right at the show," Doc says. "There wasn't any hype—it was all business."

Toby loved seeing the entire ski business in one place at the same time. Almost everyone there, she noted, came out of the 10th Mountain Division. "We all knew one another" she said. "It was like an annual reunion."

Show Date Controversy

The exhibitors needed earlier dates in order to schedule their summer production. But they wanted the show timed near the end of the ski season so that retailers would know just how much inventory to order—and also so shop owners would have free time to get away from the store. They compromised on early March as an ideal time slot. Nonetheless, Squires scheduled the 1954 show for May.

Erich Riess, who began importing Rieker boots that year, remembers sweating in a hotel room for three days waiting for customers to drop in. Like most of the vendors, he was unhappy with the show dates. Jim Weinstein, who was a skiing friend of



1964: Beconta's Jim Woolner explains his line, and terms, while shop buyers read—and write orders.

Lev Russfield and an attorney, put together a dinner at Schein's restaurant on Eighth Avenue, during which a group of vendors organized themselves as the National Ski Equipment and Clothing Association (NSECA), with Henry Barreca as president and Weinstein as executive director and general counsel. Barreca demanded an earlier date from Squires. Over several years, Squires moved the date to mid-May, then late April, then back to May. In May, 1959, the show signed up 140 exhibitors and drew 1,345 buyers.

Despite this success—or perhaps because of it—the NESCA group wanted control. Weinstein, interviewed recently at age 98, said "Henry came to me and said 'We want to run our own show.' I said fine, and I set up a meeting in the New York Trade Show building on Eighth Avenue. Barreca and the group asked me to organize a show."

In the fall of 1959, Squires launched the National Winter Sports Show,

aimed at consumers, at the New York Coliseum. He fell ill that winter. NSECA offered \$16,000 for his lease on the Trade Show building, and took over the spring trade show for 1960.

One evening Weinstein and Russell met for a drink at the Advertising Club in New York. An agency executive overheard their conversation and butted in. "Hey, I heard about your group," he said. "What's it called?"

"The National Ski Equipment and Clothing Association."

"That's a lousy name!" the ad man exclaimed. "Call it Ski Industries America!"

The SIA membership voted to make theirs a "closed" show—that is, a vendor had to join the organization in order to exhibit. They also adopted the rule that a prospective member needed a full year of selling—and delivering—to ski shops before joining.

The rule looked exclusionary. Brunswick Corp., McGregor and a number of other large sporting goods companies were listed on the New York Stock Exchange, but SIA wouldn't let them into the show. "We wanted to protect ski shops," Weinstein

explained. "The problem was that a new vendor could take orders in March for delivery in October, but if there weren't enough orders the vendor could renege in July without telling anyone. In that case the retailer would be stuck with no Christmas merchandise."

Trade Restraint Charges

"The sporting goods companies screamed to Washington that SIA was guilty of restraint of trade," Weinstein says. "For a week I had a battery of antitrust lawyers going through our books, and I finally had to go to Washington to see the attorney general. The clincher was when I pulled out a quote from Justice Louis Brandeis, who had said that all trade is restraint of some sort, and that what was illegal was unreasonable restraint." When it was all over, Howard Head called Weinstein one of the best antitrust lawyers in America.

Weinstein found he could no longer run both his Boston law practice and SIA, and he certainly didn't want to manage a trade show. Howard Head nominated an acquaintance from

Baltimore, Brent Kansler, as executive director. "He had no trade show experience and didn't know his way around the industry," Weinstein says. "He moved into the New York office and took off on an expensive flying tour of the country to meet all the members. By the time we realized what he was doing, he had spent a small fortune. Barreca told him to resign or we'd call the district attorney."

For 1962, SIA hired Doris Taplinger as executive director. She lasted a year. When, in 1963, SIA hired Doc Des Roches as executive director, Taplinger cannily took advantage of the one-year-wait rule to set up a competing show. Taplinger's Snow Show accommodated new vendors until they could qualify for SIA membership—and, with sales growing at an average 15 percent per year, there was no shortage of start-up companies.

The Western Winter Sports Representatives Association (WWSRA) ran trade shows in Denver, Seattle and San Francisco. Their rules excluded company owners from the selling floor—only member reps could meet with dealers. Sun Valley's pugna-cious Ed Scott began a campaign to end this exclusion. Scott was struggling to get his aluminum ski pole into the market, and served as his own sales rep. After a two-year battle, in 1963 SIA launched its own West Coast show in San Francisco.

Over the next five years, SIA added a third show, in Chicago. March meant a long trek from New York to Chicago to San Francisco. Retailers didn't have to travel far to attend one of the shows, but exhibitors found the schedule prohibitively expensive. Sentiment began to build for a single national show.

In 1968 the West Coast show was held at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. "The Las Vegas Convention

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Authority sent down a retired NFL player to pitch our board meeting," Weinstein said. "He promised that if we would come to Las Vegas we'd have no unions to deal with, and we'd be charged 10 percent of what we were currently paying for exhibit space. There was some opposition. Some members were afraid we'd spend all night gambling and getting drunk."

When it came to the vote, 67 members were for a single show in Las Vegas and 48 against. After a three-year wait to get the right dates, the 1972 SIA Show opened in the Las Vegas Convention Center in early March. It drew 200 exhibitors and 11,000 attendees.

Doc Des Roches ran a tight ship. He patrolled the show with a walkie-talkie and imposed fines for infractions of the rules. Exhibitors weren't allowed to enter other exhibitors' booths; buyers weren't allowed on the floor before 9 a.m.; no merchandise moved off the floor without paperwork. To prevent pirating of designs by non-member firms, only accredited press were allowed to bring in cameras.

The industry, however, burst with enthusiasm. A new generation of managers was succeeding the veterans of the 10th, and the rock-and-roll youth culture was everywhere in evidence. Skiwear companies launched raucous fashion shows. Doc couldn't control activities outside the convention center. Drunkenness was not the issue: Vendors and buyers alike brought drugs to hotel room parties. Perfectly respectable companies organized wet T-shirt contests, and at least one vendor was fined for bringing a stripper to the booth. A few drug busts occurred, although the police normally waited until after show hours to visit.

Some Eastern retailers didn't see the point in traveling to Las Vegas. By 1975, regional rep organizations were running early on-snow trade fairs to give buyers a chance to ski on the new gear. But Las Vegas remained the main event even as the recession of the late '70s slowed the growth of the business.

Doc Des Roches retired in 1982,

and SIA's energetic marketing director, David Ingemie, took over as trade show boss. "There was a major shift happening," Ingemie recalls. "The big distribution companies [A&T, Garcia, Beconta] were breaking up and being replaced by wholly owned subsidiaries. Membership grew from about 150 to 300."

Ingemie inaugurated an associate member category to let vendors into the show in their first year of business.

Eventually, as the snowboard business boomed, so did the show: In 1996, 900 exhibitors took a massive 516,000 square feet of booth space. Counting non-exhibiting firms, SIA membership topped out at nearly 1,100.

Snowboard Firms Arrive

Aging ski industry executives viewed the snowboard makers—most of whom were garage operations, handcrafting a few hundred boards each—as barbarians. Their counter-culture attitudes prevailed at their show booths. Young, rambunctious entrepreneurs full of enthusiasm and with little respect for tradition, they were segregated in a separate wing of the Convention Center. The snowboard ghetto boiled with the same kind of loud music, professional-grade pulchritude and illegal ingestibles that had afflicted the freestyle era. In 1997 a number of young party-goers were led from the exhibit hall in handcuffs.

For 1998, the show was "integrated"—the snowboard companies mainstreamed onto the main floor. By this time, consolidation had riddled the ranks of both the ski and snowboard factories. The big guns—Rossignol, Salomon, Atomic, Burton, K2—were growing at the expense of smaller firms, and SIA membership had begun to shrink. The retail side of the business had also consolidated. Few small mom-and-pop stores survived into the



At the 1972 show, DesRoches presented Barbara Ann Cochran her portrait after her slalom win at Sapporo.

new century. Across the West, most ski shops were operated by a few very large chains. This meant that fewer buyers wrote bigger orders.

For 2002, the board moved the trade show dates up from March to the end of January. Retailers across the country rebelled—50 years later, owners of smaller shops still couldn't leave the store at midwinter. In 2003 the show—700 exhibitors occupying 315,000 square feet—moved to new quarters at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center. Roughly 3,500 buyers attended from 1,720 retail businesses across the country.

Entering its second half-century, the show today is vital and buoyant, if no longer raucous. The north end of the hall, dominated by snowboard companies, is still louder and livelier, though a visitor is less likely now to be knocked down by a company president on a skateboard. At the ski end of the hall, company execs no longer dress like bankers, though a few ties and blazers are in evidence.

And it's still a family reunion. "I don't know where I'd be this time of year if it wasn't at the show," says 82-year-old Erich Riess. "This is where all my friends are." *

2003 marks the 50th anniversary of the trade show. 2004 will mark the 50th anniversary of NSECA, and SIA plans to celebrate both occasions at the Las Vegas Trade Show, Jan. 26-29, 2004.

Alf Engen Museum Showcases Utah's Ski Heritage

Serving as the 2002 Winter Olympics press center, this impressive facility has transformed itself into a state-of-the-art ski museum.

By John B. Allen

Ten million dollars can buy a lot of ski museum. That's what has been invested—thanks to sizable foundation grants and large private donations—in the new state-of-the-art Alf Engen Ski Museum in Park City, Utah. And the Alf Engen Foundation can be proud of its achievement.

Thirteen years in the planning stage, the museum—as part of the Joe Quinney Winter Sports Center—was ready to play host to the media at the Salt Lake City Winter Games in February 2002 before coming into its own. Although plans for the museum started out, according to Alan Engen, as a modest A-frame at Alta, when the Olympics arrived, a new level of endeavor appeared feasible.

When I was there just prior to the Olympics, row after row of telephones lined the desks waiting for the world's journalists. Now the museum is operating in its 4,500-square-foot space with film showings, evolutionary displays, touch-screen activities and a virtual reality theater which will provide any Olympic wannabe with plenty of thrills on the Snow Basin downhill course. Nearly 50 skis from a collection of about 350 are on view. Not on display but in storage for use in future exhibits are racks of clothing, boots, bindings and all the paraphernalia of skiing's past.

Although this is the Alf Engen Ski Museum, it also serves as the Intermountain Ski Museum—and as a repository of historical artifacts, it's right up to date, with the pioneers of aerials and snowboarding represented alongside the history of the 2002 Winter Games. The official 2002 Winter Olympics film will be played regularly this coming summer to go with the artifacts on view on the second floor. The Olympic Gallery is expected to be ready by summer.

The collections inside are rivaled by the Olympic ven-



Eight-foot bronze statues of Alf Engen and Joe Quinney greet visitors at the museum's entrance.

ues outside. The jumps and various bob, skeleton and luge courses—all available for the summer tourist as well as for serious training—provide both an artifact of the Games as well as a training center for aspiring Olympians. The whole complex of the Utah Olympic Park, some 390 acres, which cost the state's taxpayers approximately \$59 million, is available for a \$7 entrance fee, \$5 for teenagers and \$3 for children 12 and under. A portion of the entrance fee goes to the museum.

The Quinney Center is named for Joe Quinney, one of the original incorporators of the Salt Lake Winter Sports Association (which became the Alta Ski Lifts Company) and author of Utah's ski tramway safety bill, among many other accomplishments. The center houses the Alf Engen Museum, a Mountain Adventure Retail shop, and the Ecker Hill café, so named for Utah's famous jumping hill of the 1920s and 1930s—now remembered by a plaque in the midst of an almost-suburban development. It has taken much effort to pull all this together. The Engen Founda-

tion's chair is Alf's son, Alan Engen, whose eight-person executive committee is part of a larger board which includes well-known Utah Olympic skier Jim Gaddis. The executive director is long time Alta instructor Dave Amidon, aided by assistant director Connie Nelson, who held the same post at the Olympic Park. Museum curator Mark Jensen was formerly curator for Salt Lake City Organizing Committee. There is also an administrative secretary and a building superintendent.

The first induction into the Intermountain Hall of Fame—honoring Averill Harriman, Gretchen Fraser, Junior Bounous, Joe Quinney, Zane Doyle and Engen brothers Corey, Alf and Sverre—took place in September 2002. During the ceremony, two eight-foot statues, created in bronze by sculptor Kraig Varner, were unveiled of Joe Quinney and Alf Engen.

An abundance of photographs, videos, action mannequins, and a wealth of Engen artifacts marks this new museum as a major repository



Alf Engen, Utah skiing legend.

of skiing history. It is a heritage that is shared with the University of Utah's Utah Ski Archives, which is housed in the Marriott Library on the Salt Lake City campus. The Utah Ski Archives consists of print, film and photographic material, which is available to the Engen museum at any time.

This past summer nearly 600 people passed through the museum each month. With the finalizing of the 2002 Olympic Gallery it is expected that more will visit to savor the heritage. The museum also has plans to become fully accredited, a move that the board feels will give the museum an official stamp and garner professional respect. Plans for museum membership are in the making as well.

The Alf Engen Ski Museum has made marvelous progress to date. Museum officials look forward to hosting ISHA members during the association's annual Gathering this spring. It will surely be a highlight that history-minded skiers will not want to miss. *

Museum Happenings Elsewhere....

The success of the **U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame's** December auction is evident. The \$4,000 raised has helped to pay off the Hall's debt. Now the directors feel a burden has been lifted, enabling them to go on to other matters. To that end, the library staff is compiling biographies of all Honored Members. It is hoped that this project will be finished in time for the 2004 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Ski Hall of Fame. Frida Waara has been hired as Development Director.

The new manager of the **Beekley Collection** of skiing memorabilia, which will soon go to Mammoth, Calif., is T.J. Chase. Chase recently made a trip east to New Hartford, Conn., to inspect the major collection of ski books, art and artifacts he will oversee once it moves to California—optimistically, in the early fall.

With the departure of Dor Helling in January, the **Vermont Ski Museum** continues without an executive director. Meanwhile, Sandy Devine has been hired as Museum Administrator. The museum played host to a reunion of Walter Foeger's Natur Teknik instructors early in March. Plans are moving ahead for the collection of oral histories, and the museum's film pro-

gram is currently underway on Saturday nights.

A new committee has been formed at the **Maine Ski Museum** to discuss founding a Maine Ski Hall of Fame. Headed by journalist Dave Irons, the committee is moving forward with plans for an inaugural induction banquet next October. Details on the banquet will be announced in early summer, at which time invitations will be sent to the first class to be inducted. The museum is also concentrating on oral histories. The urgency of doing so was brought home when Wes Marco, an early supporter of Sugarloaf, died in December. Presently there are four Sugarloaf memoirs and fundraising continues in order to transcribe interviews already completed.

At this writing, the **New England Ski Museum** was gearing up for its annual Schneider Meistercup race in early March. This year a team from the famed British Kandahar Club will be competing. Bob Irwin, a longtime collector of ski books and art, has donated his library to the museum, which will be moved to the museum once this season's abundance of snow is cleared. This is a major gift and will form the core of the Irwin Library in the new Paumgarten Research Center. —J.H.A.

DB Skis, Otto Heads East, Udall's Lament

60 Years Ago

(From the January and February 1943 issues of *Ski News*)

Otto's Arsenal

Otto Lang, head of the world-famous Sun Valley, Idaho, Ski School, is now



Dick Durance and Gordie Wren explain the proper fitting of bindings to Para Ski Troopers at Alta, Utah.

at Manchester, Vt., where he has formed a ski school to serve the Big Bromley, Snow Valley and Little Bromley areas. Also in the school are four of his former Sun Valley instructors, including Fred Iselin, Miss Elli Stiller [the future Mrs. Iselin.], Victor Gottschalk and Willy Meyer.

Skiing Call to Arms

A headline reads, "Army Calls for 2,000 More Mountain Troopers At Once." The article directs those interested in enlisting to contact the National Ski Patrol System in New York City.

Leave the Driving to Them

Skis areas try to cope with the wartime ban on pleasure driving. "While private cars are strictly adhering to the pleasure driving ban, skiers can avail themselves of regular bus service."

40 Years Ago

(From *Ski*, February 1963)

Growing Room Needed

"The thrill of skiing is unique, and today some 5,000,000 of our men, women and children have learned this—with the number growing at an amazing rate. The question is: Where will they ski when their numbers exceed available open spaces and winter sports facilities? In the present session of the Congress, one of the Administration's most vigorous efforts will be in support of . . . 'green acres' for a growing population with more leisure time."—Stewart Udall, U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

50 Years Ago

(From *The New England Ski News*, November 30, 1952)

For the Lost Ski Company Project

An ad from Derby Ball Manufacturing of Waterbury, Vt., reads: DB skis are wonderful," says famous ski maestro Sepp Ruschp. "Here at Stowe we recommend DB skis for their balanced flexibility, which makes skiing exciting and fun."

G.I. Pin-Up

The Massa-schussers lost their best racer this year when Tommy Eagan went into the army. He is now stationed in Camp Breckenridge, Ky., and instead of pin-ups of girls, one can see a snapshot of his new Attenhofers gracing the walls.... Nicknamed 'Stein,' Tommy had a very successful racing season last year."



Dutt Jaeger of Norway is the popular new instructor at Bob Johnson's new Indoor Ski School at Newton Corner, Mass. She formerly taught at the famous Tom Mustad Ski School in Oslo.

30 Years Ago

(From *Ski*, February 1973)

Rick's Great Leap

"Suddenly, I was over the valley. Upside down, falling head-first, right next to the wall. I was tumbling, spinning, falling. Release the skis. Get stable, stomach to earth, arch your back. Hands next to sides. Should have the chute open by now! Pull. A soft jerk and the plummet ended."—Rick Sylvester, describing his daring ski and parachute leap off El Capitan in California's Yosemite Valley.

(From *Ski*, Spring 1973)

Warren's Way

New Ski Book Review: *How the Racers Ski* by Warren Witherell. "The need for racers to carve their turns, rather than skid them, is stressed. However... the propriety of Witherell's condemnation of other teaching techniques is questionable."

The Better Mousetrap

The meteoric rise and sudden demise of the plate binding

By Seth Masia

It all began with Jean Beyl and Mitch Cubberley, each of whom perceived that leather is not a reliable material for a mechanical bearing surface—the interface between the soft boot sole and metal holding devices. The year was 1948.

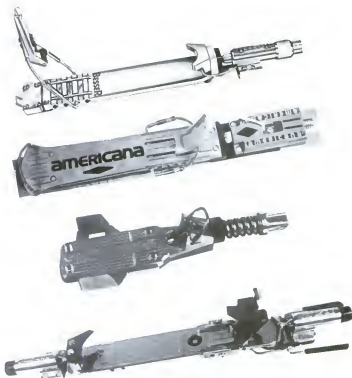
Beyl's solution, the Look binding, was a metal plate that was attached to the ski but pivoted at the center so it could rotate like a turntable to protect the leg by allowing the foot to twist with it. Cubberley's Cubco binding was a simple spring-loaded latch at toe and heel; instead of gripping the leather boot sole, the latches closed on steel pieces screwed into the boot sole (see "The Industry," Third Issue 2002).

Beyl soon abandoned the metal-to-metal reliability of his plate in favor of the Nevada I toe unit. The lasting contributions of his original binding were the principles of tibial axis rotation (during lateral release, the boot rotates around an "axle" almost directly underneath the ankle, thus minimizing torque on the tibia), and lateral elasticity (the binding absorbs shock at the toe, immediately returning the boot to center when the load dissipates). But Cubberley's design, with improved features, became the standard of safety and reliability for the next two decades. Shops found it easy to adjust and maintain. It worked. Customers liked the latch-in feature, the first in the industry. It was cheap, and ugly. It was a better mousetrap, and that's exactly what it looked like.

By 1962, a couple of skiers thought they could do better.

Von Besser Breaks His Leg

Kurt Von Besser, a cigar-chomping, tear-gas manufacturer, broke his leg in 1959 while skiing in Wisconsin. "I was actually standing still," he recalls. "A kid skied across the fronts of my skis and hit me in the stomach. I went over backward and broke a fibula. I thought, why don't these bindings release backward? And I wanted to take the boot sole out of the equation." Von Besser knew about the Cubco binding, which did release upward at the toe. But, he said, "I thought Cubco produced too much friction. I



From top: Besser, Americana, Spademan, Gertsch.

began development of my own binding in 1961-62." He patented a full-length boot plate which detached from the ski to provide release.

Spademan Invests His Royalties

Meanwhile, the slight, scholarly Rich Spademan arrived in Truckee, Calif. Spademan grew up in Detroit and skied as a teenager at Boyne Mountain. He became a safety crusader after graduating from medical school at the University of Michigan. While doing his first-year residency at Stanford in 1962, he studied the epidemiology of ski injuries at Truckee's Tahoe Forest Hospital, which handled emergency cases from Squaw Valley, where business was up in the wake of the 1960 Olympics. "Bindings were trash," Spademan recalled, in a 1983 interview. "We saw 150 fractures in one three-day weekend."

As an intern, Spademan had designed a successful intravascular catheter. But in 1962, he began to think about designing a safer ski binding.

In the Squaw study, Spademan said, "We found that people didn't know how to adjust their bindings, and that having multiple adjustments compounded the problem. I was familiar, through our x-rays, with the typical pattern of skiing leg injuries, and I came up with a list of three prob-



Spademan realized that if he wanted a boot to work well with his binding, he'd have to build it himself. The result: the Spademan 900, which went out of production after only a year.

reduce leverage on the leg," he said. "We made rapid progress after that. I minimized the number of adjustments necessary, eliminated the toe piece to allow for deceleration release, and reduced leverage on the tibial axis."

The development process took nearly four years. In the meantime, Spademan finished his residency and was appointed assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery at Stanford. The patented catheter was already being sold and Spademan spent the royalties on his ski binding. In September 1966 he was granted a U.S. patent. He made a couple of hundred pairs, took a leave of absence from Stanford, loaded the bindings in the trunk of his car and visited every ski shop owner between Seattle and San Diego.

"They all thought I was nuts," he said. "No one wanted to ski on the bindings. But I believed so strongly in the concept that I kept on going."

Spademan finally got some ski patrollers at Squaw and Boyne to use his bindings. Most blew out right away. He

lems that needed to be solved:

Bindings didn't release in enough different directions. Adjustment was too complex. Bindings didn't release during sudden deceleration."

Spademan went through a lot of prototypes trying to solve these problems. His first binding secured the boot at the heel only; it produced a lot of toe slop. "Soon I realized the importance of fixing the boot at the tibial axis to

made adjustments to the prototypes and the patrollers were able to stay in. With encouragement from several local Tahoe physicians, he improved the prototypes steadily.

The ski industry still thought Spademan's design too weird to be commercially viable. Spademan realized he'd have to manufacture it himself. In 1969 he set up production in a shed in the back of a Palo Alto construction yard and made 1,000 pairs.

It took three years to redesign the binding so it would hold a strong skier. The nascent freestyle skiing movement helped. By the winter of 1974-75, most pro freestylers were using the lightweight binding. Sales went from 10,000 to 100,000 in three years.

Freestyle was also good to another start-up: Von Besser, patents in hand, set up production in an old brick loft in Chicago. His timing was exquisite: During the ensuing months, Salomon dropped its long-time U.S. distributor, Anderson & Thompson—and A&T signed on to distribute Besser. Suddenly, pro freestylers began launching big air on Besser bindings. In 1974 Besser shipped 280,000 pairs—a 27 percent market share—and grossed nearly \$11 million. In 1974, Von Besser and his partner John Kuhn bought A&T for \$15 million.

Gertsch: Turning Heads at Head

During the same years, in Wengen, Switzerland, retired ski racing champion Ernst Gertsch and his son Ullrich had created a clever design for an entirely different type of boot plate. The Gertsch plate, a solid aluminum forging, was a platform roughly the length of the boot sole. Its rear edge formed a wedge; at the forward end, the plate engaged a spring-loaded finger similar to Cubco's. The advantage of the Gertsch (over the Cubco) was that it was a polished, handsome piece of gear, and it didn't force the skier to walk around with a slab of metal screwed to his boot sole. The Gertsch family began selling the binding at home in 1967; American ski shop owners got their first look at it in the spring of 1968. Engineers at the Head Ski Co. liked it, redesigned it, and sold it as the Competition XD.

Burt: Retractability and More

Burton Weinstein, a product development engineer, found himself falling down and getting up on New England ski slopes. "I had a devil of a time on ice getting my skis back on," he says. "I sat down and drew a boot on a piece of paper, with a ski about a foot away, with a line between them. Problem: Get A to B." Then he built a prototype, creating the first retractable binding. After release, it automatically wound the ski back onto the boot and clicked into place.

Weinstein soon sold the patent rights to investor Alex Eisemann, who set up a new company to manufacture and sell the Burt binding. They hired ski binding guru Gordon Lipe, inventor of the Release Check tester and the Lipe Slider anti-friction device. "That was the best thing we did," Weinstein says. "It was Gordon's idea to put the mechanism under the boot instead of fore and aft."

It was a formidable engineering project. Weinstein and Lipe fought over every detail, and the resulting product was feature-rich: a step-in plate binding which could release in any direction.

Weinstein and Eisemann got the Burt I into production and sold the first units in 1973. But engineering the complex product had exhausted their finances, and in 1973 the company was sold to the sporting goods distributor Garcia Corp. Production moved to the Casco factory in Conn., where the Burt shared space with a line of automotive accessories.

Plate Sales Soar

With six brands in contention—Besser, Burt, Cubco, Gertsch, Head and Spademan—plate bindings now commanded nearly half the market, and their share was still rising. But some consumers resisted plates. There was the convenience factor: Only the Burt was a step-in and, except for the Burt, none was easy to reset after a fall. Spademan and Cubco boot plates made for perilous walking. Some skiers thought the full-length boot plate would create a flat zone in the center of the flexed ski. Racers didn't want upward release at the toe, or the three-quarters of an inch of extra height between ski and boot sole.

But the safety advantage was obvious. Tibia, ankle and foot injuries, which had fallen from 41 percent of all ski injuries in 1964 to 29 percent in 1972 (thanks to Lipe's anti-friction device campaign), now plummeted to 13 percent by 1976. "The safety record of the properly managed plate binding cannot be matched today," says Carl Ettlinger, who has made a career of studying—and improving—the injury rate.

The success of the plate binding drew more competition. American start-ups Americana and Moog joined the fray. Miller and Tyrolia launched plates, only to be scared off by Kurt Von Besser's patents. Geze sold a plate. Look and Salomon created prototype retractable plates.

In 1978, a management squabble at Garcia led to the break-up of the company. Weinstein and Eisemann sold the rights to Daiwa-Seiko in Japan. Daiwa had no distribution network in the U.S., and the brand disappeared here.

Spademan sales were stronger than ever. Then, in 1978, an outside machine shop delivered new molds months late. The redesigned bindings didn't reach shops until after the pre-Christmas rush—and sales plummeted.

In the spring of 1978 Salomon killed its plate project and introduced its 727 toe-and-heel binding. Its big rub-



Weinstein demonstrates the Burt II while stunt skier Corky Fowler (foreground) and Gordon Lipe look on. (Inset) The Burt retractable step-in binding.

bery operating lever made hands-free step-in and step-out a reality. An integrated retractable ski brake held the ski steady on most slopes so you could step in without bending over. The 727 offered most of the release reliability of the plates, with a lot more convenience.

In 1979 Kuhn and Von Besser were doing well with A&T. They had the hats and gloves logo sales locked up for the Lake Placid Olympics. They signed a deal to sell \$110 million worth of promotional items to Coca-Cola and McDonalds as a Moscow Summer Olympics promotion. But in December, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Jimmie Carter called for a boycott of the Moscow Games. Kuhn and Von Besser lost their shirts. "The economy was in shambles and retailers couldn't pay their bills," Von Besser fumes. "We couldn't make money, and decided to close A&T. We sold our inventory direct to the public for \$15 million."

In this economy, small firms like Gertsch, Americana and Moog couldn't finance the rapid product development needed to keep pace with Salomon. They evaporated. Over the next two years, Spademan's sales sank to zero and he returned to practicing medicine.

Meanwhile, the parts for 13,000 sets of Besser bindings still sit in a North Carolina warehouse. Release performance is right up to modern standards, or better, and no one would worry about binding height today. ✱

Hansons Still At It, Darcy Holds Forth

CHRIS AND DENNY HANSON Boot Brothers

Chris and Denny Hanson, now 61 and 58 years old, rode off into the ski industry sunset in 1981. During the Seventies, they drove the Hanson ski boot to dizzying success. The brothers grew up ski racing in Michigan. In the summers they built model airplanes and flew them in competition. Their inventive father, Alden Hanson, Sr., chief scientist at Dow Chemical (he also held the patent for "air-less" snowmaking), encouraged workshop tinkering. One result: They reinforced their leather ski boots with a fiberglass hood. It was the start of a concept.

In the late Sixties, Chris trained as an industrial designer and Denny worked as a sales rep for Head Skis. When Alden Sr. invented thixotropic—a Silly Putty-like material that would eventually become Lange-flo—the brothers shopped it around to the ski boot factories. In 1970, Bob Lange bought into the flow fit program and hired Denny as chief of research and development; Denny then hired Chris as chief ski boot designer. When Lange-flo ate up the liners of most of the 1971 production, Lange lost millions in warranty costs. Bob Lange fired the Hansons, not for the failure of Lange-flo, but because they were working on their own concept for a revolutionary rear-entry ski boot.

By 1972, Hanson was shipping ski boots, and enjoying meteoric success. At the top of the arc, in 1978, they sold 80,000 pairs. Every European boot factory imitated the rear-entry

design. Then a series of business blunders—a change in distribution policy and the purchase of the failing Hexcel ski factory—led to a sharp downward spiral. By 1981 the company was

made Snugs boot-fitting pads, Waveflo bike saddles, wheel chair cushions, knee pads for construction workers, and veterinary items—a Flolite insert for the treatment of split horse hooves, for instance.

Chris retired in 1996, and now plays golf or skis daily from his home on the Cordillera golf course, near Avon, Colo. Watch for him at Beaver Creek: He's the guy skiing in 1980 Hanson Spyder boots. "They still fit and ski well, 22 years later," Chris says. They should: The boot was designed around his own feet.

Denny still runs the Pro Development business in Boulder, and still skis. On summer weekends, he builds and races radio-controlled sailboats—he's been lifelong sailor—up to seven feet long.

"During the years we were in it, the ski industry was an awful lot of fun," says Chris. "I don't think it's like that today, or ever will be again."

—Seth Masia



(Top) Denny, a lifelong sailor, still at the helm. (Above) Chris continues to ski, still in his 1980 Hansons.

bankrupt, and the assets were sold to the Japanese firm Daiwa. Hanson boots disappeared from western markets, though the rear-entry category lived on for another decade.

In 1986 Chris and Denny founded Flolite (now Pro Development), to manufacture and market non-boot products using Flo fit materials. They

DARCY BROWN Aspen Original

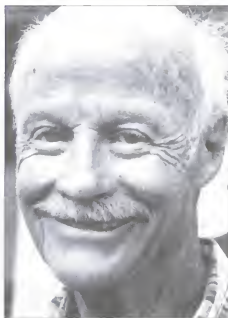
The setting is Buttermilk, in Aspen, Colo., and the day is Dec. 20, 2002. A tall, lean, rangy man is there, accompanied by a party that includes three of his daughters and a gaggle of assorted grandchildren. It is his 90th birthday and he is skiing for what he has decided will be his last outing on skis. He is David R.C. ("Darcy") Brown—oilman, cattle rancher and, for 23 years, president of the Aspen Skiing Company.

"We took a couple of runs on Buttermilk, and then on Tiehack and then down main Buttermilk finally to call it a day. It was fun." So why is he hanging up his skis? "Oh, I could go on skiing, but I can't see that well anymore. Skiing down Buttermilk, there were so many people I had to ski right behind my daughter to keep from running into someone." Right outside his house on the outskirts of Aspen he likes to snowshoe on a cross-country track. "I can't get into trouble doing that," he says with a chuckle.

Darcy's Aspen roots go deep. His childhood summers were spent in Aspen, his father having first come there in 1880. In 1946, Darcy, then in the cattle business, moved permanently to Aspen and, owning some mining claims on Ajax, quickly became involved as a director on the board of the Aspen Skiing Company, then in the start-up days of the ski resort. Eleven years later he took over as president, directing the resort until 1979. It was during this period that he helped start the

National Ski Areas Association, becoming the organization's second president in 1965.

Today, Darcy and wife Ruth divide their time between their Aspen home



Darcy: "Too much interest in the bottom line today, and not enough in good skiing."

and their place in the Hawaiian Islands. He is proud of his nine grandchildren and great grandson.

One, Jennie Hamilton, was on the Junior Olympic Ski Team and foreran several of the Nordic events in the last Olympics.

How does Darcy view the ski world today? "Too much of an interest in the bottom line," he says, "and not enough in good skiing." He adds that in his ASC tenure, "We were fortunate that almost all of our directors were as interested in providing good skiing as they were in making a lot of money." But, he feels that today's owner, the Crown family, "has done its best to restore Aspen's skiing back to where it's become a premier resort again." The "restoring" alludes to what he feels was the devastation done by the ownership of Marvin Davis, who "decided to make a jillion dollars by milking the company for all it was worth for what real estate we had."

Ever tried snowboarding? "No!" came the quick answer, "but some of my children do." Then he concedes, "I'm a little prejudiced. If I were still in charge, I think there'd be just one Aspen area where you could snow-

TRIVIA TEST

- Q. What wife of a famous ski instructor testified before the Kefauver Commission on organized crime?
- Q. Two of World War II's most famous generals were avid skiers. Who were they?
- Q. 1) In 1955, Rieker introduced its popular Olympic boot. What did it sell for? 2) What was the name of the Kastle ski that housed magnets in its base to hold the skis together?

ANSWERS (invert page)

A. 1) \$19.95. The German-made Olympic came with combination canned leather uppers, double machine stitching, double lacing, bumper pads, heel counter, steel-shanked soles and toe, heel and sole protectors. About \$85 in today's dollars, it would still be a bargain. 2) Klack. That was the sound the skis made when snapped together. No more ski test! Sold as a combi-cut "short" (170-180cm), the red and white ski was a novel design that never caught on.

A. German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who clashed in the famous desert battle of El Alamein. Rommel was a particularly avid skier who often trained his troops in the Harz Mountains of central Germany by chasing them up a hillside, then leading the charge down—then doing it all over again.

A. Virginia Hill, who moved into permanent residence at Sun Valley in 1950 and married ski instructor Hans Hauser. Hill had connections to the notorious Bugsy Siegel crime mob (she was Bugsy's girlfriend). After Siegel was murdered by a rival gang, Hill was exiled to Sun Valley, where she received a monthly shoebox full of cash to insure her silence. After her marriage to Hauser in 1950, and her testimony before the Kefauver Commission in 1951, the couple lived in Europe. Hill eventually divorced Hauser and committed suicide in Salzburg. In 1974, Hauser also took his life, in the small Salzburg restaurant that he owned.

Histories of Mammoth, Whistler, Steamboat—and a Contrarian's View

Against All Odds

By Michel Beaudry



I enjoyed this book. It is beautifully illustrated, filled with full-page, glossy four-color photos of beckoning countryside, splashy scenic sunsets, gorgeous deep powder skiing and stunning mountainscapes.

The text holds its own well by focusing on a few key people and how each shaped the Whistler resort. Building each chapter around a single person, author Beaudry provides well written and entertaining vignettes of the growth of the area, from its small beginnings to the huge winter destination now known as Whistler-Blackcomb, a remarkable rise of a winter resort in a backwater without electricity, telephones or roads.

In the first chapter, Beaudry pens a fine portrait of Myrtle Philip, an early innkeeper at Alta Lake, the name of the area before the arrival of skiing. His second chapter does an equally excellent job on Franz Wilhelmson, the original developer of Whistler, chronicling his clearing of trails and erection of lifts—although I would have preferred to learn more about his skiing background.

The third chapter showcases Jim McConkey, the Whistler ski school director, who helped to shape the development of Whistler from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s. It is beautifully written, on a level with the writing in the entire book, but here it is a bit sketchy on the evolu-

tion of deep-powder skiing at Alta in the 1940s and 1950s when McConkey was instructing there. Alf Engen's brother Sverre, the earliest recognized American expert on powder skiing, was not mentioned at all, and a couple of succinct paragraphs on the technical moves for powder skiing developed at Alta by the Engens, Dick Durrance and Junior Bounous would have been appropriate.

There are later interesting, well-researched chapters on Canadian Olympic medalist Nancy Greene and her husband Al Raine and their contribution to the development of Whistler Village, as well as on the current president of Whistler, Intrawest's Hugh Smythe. There are additional well crafted sketches of current athletes and how they made it big at Whistler.

That said, I must add that, as an amateur historian of Northwest skiing, I would have enjoyed the book all the more had Beaudry filled in the chronology to provide a sustained narrative of Whistler-Blackcomb's history. Beaudry would have done well to follow the example of Anne McMahon's "The Whistler Story," published in 1980, which is arranged with an admirable chronological completeness that carries the resort's ski history up to 20 years ago.

I would have also enjoyed some narration up front on the small ski areas around Vancouver that predated Whistler—Grouse Mountain, Hemlock and Seymour—whose growth was a precondition and inseparable link to the rise of Whistler, if

only because they provided the necessary initial population of indispensable local skiers.

These musings are not intended to detract from the book. It is a magnificent production, and delightful reading for, say, anyone cooped up by one of Whistler's legendary blizzards. The quality of the writing and the book's lavish illustration undoubtedly will make it a welcome gift for any Whistler skier. —Kirby Gilbert

Mountain Sports Press, 929 Pearl St. Boulder, CO, (800) 815-9236; 228 pages, coffee table hardcover, lavishly illustrated, \$49.95, available through amazon.com.

Mammoth: The Sierra Legend

By Martin Forstenzer



"Send me men to match my mountains." This noble plea is etched in granite, high above the state capitol—and the concept is alive and well in the Eastern Sierra. If you need proof, check out Martin Forstenzer's *Mammoth: The Sierra Legend*.

Forstenzer's opus is much more than an elegant coffee table adornment. The man has the story straight and knows his craft. Two decades in the Eastern Sierra qualify him. He's a legitimate local. As a writer his work has appeared in such publications as *The New York Times*, *Audubon Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated*. His narrative flows with

John McPhee's eye for literary detail.

The opening chapters on the history and geology of the region are rich with details and fascinating lore. Who knew that the sleepy town of Lee Vining was named for an unlucky prospector who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in a saloon fight? Revealing sidebars explore the ghosts of Bodie—a former mining town now in arrested decay—enigmatic Mono Lake, and Sierra bighorn sheep. The profiles of the early pioneers define grit. Only the tough and resourceful survived the winters in the Eastern Sierra.

Mammoth Mountain has long been known for its long season. Years before the celebrities arrived, instructors and diehards, who had to climb to the top, made it a mecca for spring skiing and instructor rallies. Los Angeles' role in the creation of Mammoth as a playground is particularly well chronicled. In fact, a case can be made that skiing's early popularity was made in Hollywood. Cortland Hill, heir to the Great Northern Railway fortune and a personality heavily involved in the National Ski Association and (as manager) the 1948 Olympic team, was a major force in the development of lift-served skiing in the Eastern Sierra. His Wooden Wings ski club attracted celebrities and socialites. Early photos of young Henry Ford and Tyrone Power cavorting in the snow bring further imagery to the story. Even today Mammoth serves Hollywood as a winter set. Dozens of movies, TV shows, and commercials have been filmed in the area. A sidebar detailing the nefarious dealings of the Los Angeles Water Company and the Owens Valley water wars only adds fuel to an ongoing blaze.

But the legend is Dave McCoy, and Forstner treats him straight up. The biographical details are all there. The unvarnished story of his rocky, peripatetic youth and the early hardscrabble existence in Mammoth is written large. McCoy is a portrait in charac-

ter: tough, resourceful, athletic, shy, smart and hard working. His maverick tradition and his ability to attract and lead were the vital organs of Mammoth's success. The trials and setbacks are also dealt with squarely. This is a refreshing contribution in an industry where the whole man is often overlooked.

The book is well researched, beautifully illustrated and elegantly designed. The sidebars provide an interesting and eclectic mix. I particularly enjoyed the pieces on Jill Kinmont Boothe's poignant watercolor, Steve Searles and his humanitarian ways of dealing with the Mammoth bear population, and the town's environmental soul, Andrea Mead Lawrence. Mammoth the Sierra Legend is an avalanche of information. It does appear, however, that the author is a bit parsimonious with his credits. Robin Morning's substantial research contributions did not find their way into the acknowledgments.

For the past three decades I've enjoyed the pleasure of Dave McCoy's friendship and mentoring and watched the evolution of a community and a resort. The mountain has served as the magnificent canvas and Dave McCoy as the ingenious artist. Forstner gets it right. Best of all, he makes it interesting. This book is a terrific read.—Bob Roberts

Mountain Sports Press, 929 Pearl St., Boulder, CO 80302, (800) 815-9236; 150 pages, coffee table hardcover, abundantly illustrated, \$49.95 (\$34.97 at amazon.com).

Steamboat: Ski Town USA

By Tom Bie



This is a coffee table book published by Mountain Sports Press as part of its series on

major North American resorts that now includes Stowe, Jackson Hole, Whistler, Mammoth, and Steamboat.

Each of these books is lavishly produced, with stunning full-page color photos and text by a veteran ski journalist—in this case, Tom Bie, a senior editor at *Skiing*.

Bie offers a solid chronological history of Steamboat, giving details on the longest and, in many ways, the most compelling history of any ski town in the West.

Serious skiing got started on the 400-foot vertical Howelsen Hill at the edge of town. It was here that Carl Howelsen, a Norwegian émigré and stunt jumper for Barnum & Bailey Circus, built the first jump in 1915 and began to inspire the town's first great fliers. It was also the focus of the Steamboat Winter Carnival, which Howelsen organized the year before, in 1914.

The author pursues the Steamboat story with commendable thoroughness through the transition from jumping as the main sport to alpine skiing as the major interest. Town residents cut trails on both sides of the jump for the newfangled sport whose attraction accelerated in 1938 with the building of a boat tow, essentially through the sweat of a citizenry realizing their dream for the town. In 1948, the town installed a unique combination chair and T-bar up Howelsen.

Steamboat was now well on its way to becoming a true skier's home, a town where more ski heroes would be trained, more great coaches would work, more Olympic team members would live, and more community ski programs would be offered than anywhere else in the country. At the same time, local youngsters' craze for skiing was tempered by the work ethic of the thriving Yampa Valley ranch and farming economy.

The town also installed as coach of the Steamboat Winter Sports Club Gordy Wren, just back from the 1948 Olympics at which he had uniquely

qualified for both the U.S. Olympic alpine and nordic teams. A third-generation Steamboat native, Gordy became the first American to jump over 300 feet when he set the Howelsen Hill record at 301 feet in 1950. In the next five years, Gordy would turn out 12 Steamboaters on the U.S. Olympic team, including Buddy Skeeter and Lorin Werner, Marv Crawford, Moose Barrows and Katy Rodolph. He was linked in the public mind with Steamboat as strongly as Billy Kidd today.

During Wren's reign the town began its long trajectory into the very different world of a major resort economy, with the town's residents—at first—firmly in charge of the resort's development. But Steamboat, like every other major American ski resort from 1970 on—and the author tracks the business story well—became part of an ever-surging sector of the national economy. The development on the big mountain, Mt. Werner (named for local and international ski hero, the late Buddy Werner) and was at first directed by locals, then by not-so-locals, then by LTV, a mega defense contractor, then by a Japanese conglomerate, then by the country's largest ski conglomerate, the American Skiing Company, which retains ownership to this day.

World champion and Olympic medalist Billy Kidd, named in 1970 as director of skiing, served as a constantly vital and effective cowboy-hatted icon for the resort during Steamboat's period of greatest growth.

By 1982, the resort was billing itself as having "more mountain than Aspen, more powder than Vail, more lifts than Snowmass, more sun than Sun Valley, more bars than Utah." But two years ago, author Bie writes, the falling fortunes of ASC presaged a less happy town. Yet citizens took compensatory satisfaction in Steamboat being a great mountain and a vibrant town.

The author has done an excellent job of building the narrative from cow-town grit to mega-resort luxury, gently noting at the end of his tale

that town residents are left to contemplate welfare families sharing the town with a private helipad, and the fact that the average cost of a one-family dwelling in Yampa Valley is now \$835,890. In all, it is a compelling story set in a book fashioned with an artistry that is immensely pleasing to the eye—and to any skier who has had at least a fling at the superlative skiing that is the heart of Steamboat.

—Morten Lund

Mountain Sports Press, 929 Pearl St. Boulder, CO 80302, (800) 815-9236; 216 pages, coffee table hardcover, lavishly illustrated, \$49.95. Also available at mountainchalet.net.

Downhill Slide

By Hal Clifford

Hal Clifford wins the prize for the most controversial ski book in memory. He is the onetime real estate editor for *Ski* magazine, and from this background concludes that major ski resorts in North America are going to hell in a handbasket.

Clifford is plainly angry at the three conglomerates that now, he claims, sell nearly 24 percent of the nation's lift tickets, setting forth the premise that these institutions have fouled their nests, have the countryside to be overbuilt, and turned out Disney ski villages largely comprised of tourist traps and theme park architecture. They have, he contends, turned slopes into characterless superhighways, recruited underpaid legions of foreign help, crushed the ski towns and surrounding communities politically, wrecked the environment and, in general, have behaved like corporations whose power is unchecked within wide ethical and legal restraints.

Clifford has nothing good to say about the American Skiing Company, Vail Ski Resorts and Intrawest. Further, he says little about the advantages accrued from the

resorts' huge investments over the past 20 years in state-of-the-art grooming, snowmaking and lift technology. He is out to raise the consciousness of those who see only the improved facilities and overlook the issues of the communities, the workers and the environment.

This is a particularly conflicted situation for older skiers, who no longer ski moguls, nor crud, and so are the skiers who feel most empowered by better grooming and more capacious lift networks. Yet most older skiers miss the egalitarian spirit of days gone by, when skiers felt themselves a brotherhood, happily befriending ski bums and townspeople who were skiers themselves.

Older skiers mourn all that is gone: They do not wave at each other on the road, do not sing ski songs at the bar, do not dine at common tables in the lodge, and are split between those who love haute cuisine and those who cannot afford it.

There is a complicated, nevertheless critical, discussion that needs to take place. Unfortunately, Clifford brings argument rather than discussion to the table, having written a polemic rather than a history. Not that there isn't plenty of history cited in evidence—given that some of the details are off: the first chairlift was not in Colorado, for example.

Clifford's polemic is also about the nature of American society, which has historically lacked consistent political will to rein in private enterprise. Americans let enterprise do as it will, even if it destroys itself, along with all the jobs involved.

Clifford's book is recommended reading for anyone who wants to ponder in an informed way the pros and cons of the future direction of the sport—even if only because Clifford presents the negative side so vigorously. —Morten Lund

Sierra Club Books, 85 Second St., San Francisco 94105, (415) 977-5532, hardcover, 282 pages, \$24.95. Also available at www.sierraclub.org/books.

REMEMBERING

DEL MULKEY Ski Photographer

Del Mulkey, a noted ski photographer, died Dec. 8 at the age of 72 in Paris, France. Mulkey's assignments for *Ski* and *Skiing* magazines, as well as many other international publications, carried him to the world's most exotic places. His memorable images captured climbers, peasants, fashion models, kayakers, mountains and ski racers alike. His major work in skiing began in Chamonix at the 1962 World Alpine Championships and continued, through the years, to the Olympic Games in Innsbruck, Grenoble and Sapporo. Growing up on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, he raced at the University of Montana. After a stint in the Army, he followed his love for Europe and settled in southern France. He was independent and multi-talented, known as well for his wood-working skills and beautiful watercolors. But it was in the mountains that he was happiest, where he shared some of life's most exciting moments with the likes of extreme skiers such as Sylvain Saudan. Said longtime friend and filmmaker Harvey Edwards, "Modesty, understatement and honesty are the words to describe my departed friend." Mulkey is survived by two daughters and a grandson.



JACK MASON Mountain Manager

John "Jack" Mason, mountain manager at Winter Park Colo., died Nov. 24 after suffering a seizure while riding a ski lift at the resort. He was 53. A graduate of Middlebury College, Mason arrived at Winter Park in 1971 in a van with his



new bride, \$11 in his pocket, and determination to land a job. He was hired as a ski patroller. In Mason's 24 years on the patrol (his rescue and management skills became legendary), he worked his way up to head of the patrol, then to other supervisory positions, and finally to mountain manager in 1995. He helped found the National Ski Patrol's Professional Division and was the association's chairman from 1992 to 1996. A superb athlete and exceptional skier, he was an avid mountain biker and, in his 50s, became a certified snowboard instructor. Mason was also an optimist. Associates and friends alike regarded him as Winter Park's best public relations asset, engaging children, parents and newcomers with unending enthusiasm. He is survived by a son and a daughter.

ROBY ALBOUY Renaissance Man

Longtime Aspenite Roby Albouy died in July in Aspen, Colo. Albouy, who was born in Grenoble, France, and was in his 80s at the time of his death, emigrated to the U.S. after having escaped to the mountains in World War II to join the French Underground. He was a ski instructor in Seattle, Sun Valley and, finally, Aspen where he owned a restaurant. Fluent in several languages, he served as a special envoy with the U.S. State Dept., where he was responsible for traveling with foreign dignitaries, introducing them to U.S. culture and the American outdoors. He was Howard Head's western sales rep in the early years, helping Head establish his ski in the U.S. He was also a ski equipment expert who wrote many articles for *Ski* magazine in the mid-1960s, after which he joined True



Temper to help design and launch that firm's ski. One of his major accomplishments was his translation and publishing of trendsetting French ski technique books of the time. A man of many talents, Albouy was a gourmet chef, wine connoisseur, expert fly fisherman, art lover and superb backwoodsman. Longtime admirer David Rowan said of Albouy, "I have to count him among the most interesting human beings I've ever met." Albouy is survived by a daughter.

BEN RINALDO Ski Journalist

Ski journalist and publisher Ben Rinaldo died in late February, at age 91, at his home in Studio City, Calif. He was a film producer and Hollywood talent agent whose life in organized skiing began in 1950 when he joined the Table Mountain, Calif., ski patrol. There he quickly rose to patrol leader, earning his patrol high honors in the West. He later turned to ski writing for a chain of San Fernando Valley newspapers and, with his public relations skills, created corporate promotions to help local areas benefit from the involvement of large companies. He was president of the U.S. Ski Writers Association in 1975-77 and 1982-84 and was inducted into the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame in 1985, the first print journalist to be so honored. In 1975, he became owner and publisher of *The Skier*, the largest ski newspaper at the time in the West. One of the most influential members of the American ski press, his goal was to have the industry and those who write about it understand each other's problems and communicate effectively. He is survived by his wife of 62 years. ✽



Sailer's Secrets

My father always knew how great my joy in skiing was, and this joy was most important to me in competition. If you go to the starting line filled with grim determination, and take off from it in bitter seriousness, you will become tense. During the sharpest competition, the pure joy of skiing must hang on in some corner of your heart, because it's this joy that makes an icy stretch of hell still bearable and brings out in the racer the strength he needs to win....

I am convinced that a skier's success depends to a large degree on the brain's control of the body. I don't mean to say that I slip down the mountain without a sense of direction. On the contrary, this is a very conscious kind of skiing, as much a mental as a physical achievement. After I ski on a course that I don't know too well, I feel the exertion more in my head than in my legs. In my brain it seems as if someone has asked me a hundred rapid-fire questions, which, in order to survive, I have to answer equally fast. That is why the reactions of a racer play such a decisive role in skiing. I only need to throw a snowball at someone who goes up to the start

with me. From the way he reacts, I know how he will handle the tricks of the course....

Eager reporters always ask me about the "secret" of a downhill racer's success. In my opinion, this so-called "secret" lies in the ability to think ahead. You have only to



notice where a racer has his eyes during a fast downhill event. If he looks only on the course that he must conquer at that moment, he isn't much. The good racer looks far ahead of his skis. With my thoughts I am much farther ahead than with my eyes. On the Hahnenkamm's "Streif," for example, I have long been thinking of the steep drop while my skis shoot through the "Mousetrap." You simply must have

this ability of being able to separate what the body has to do now from what the eyes are observing, and to harmonize this optical impression with thoughts that run far ahead. If you can't, it doesn't make sense to start. The eyes control the things you have decided to do. In the meantime, the legs do what the head and eyes have ordered them to do....

Every Olympic racer has a recipe while waiting for a race. I don't really have one, except that on those days I usually don't do anything that I don't usually do on a day off. I don't think it's a good idea to change your habits with a special diet and a special daily agenda. When I'm hungry I eat what I like. When I'm thirsty I drink, and I drink what pleases me. If I want to dance during 5 o'clock tea—why not? If I'm sleepy I go to bed. In short, everything happens as if nothing special is in the offing. I feel that the nervousness of some racers is linked to the fact that they are continually reminded of what is to come by their special diets and other "dos" and "don'ts"—so that they can never turn off the pressure. ✱

*From Toni Sailer's book *My Way to the Triple Olympic Victory*, excerpted in the September 1961 issue of *Ski* magazine.*

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